

VILLEROY;

OR, THE

FATAL MOMENT.



VILLEROY;

OR, THE

FATAL MOMENT:

A

NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY A LADY.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR W. LANE, LEADENHALL STREET,

M,DCC,XC

ALPHABET

PHILOSOPHY

NO. 1

THE

THE

THE

THE



INTRODUCTION.

A DIFFICULTY has this moment occurred, that very much deranges me—It is, the necessity of addressing what I have wrote to somebody; and who shall that somebody be? aye, there's the rub—I had 'till this instant determined to begin, Mr. Editor—but, recollecting that I was myself the

VOL. I.

B

Editor,

Editor, I was compelled to give up that design. Gentle Reader, next attracted my attention, but here a doubt interferred, whether a great proportion of my Readers might not be mis-called, by the term, Gentle: this doubt at last amounted to a certainty; I thought it best to relinquish that idea too—Finding I could not properly relate my story to either of them, my much honoured favourites, on whose indulgence I had placed a great faith, being equally assured of possessing the Editor's good will, and of avoiding the gentle Reader's censure; I resolved to be no longer hesitating, but

but to address the World, the greater part of whom I expect to peruse this, and to give it my reason for commencing author, as I declare, neither fame or wealth were the objects of my pursuit; having never been ambitious of the former, and having the good fortune to be possessed of, and contented with a small proportion of the latter.

My inducement then, for undertaking that, for which I can easily conceive there are some people, who, judging by this specimen, will deem me unqualified, was this; fate having separated

B 2 me

me from all my dear connections, I had almost said from my friends; yet that would have been ingratitude, (a crime, I trust, my heart is incapable of), for I have received friendship from some, attention from many, and civility from all, not the smallest particle of which has past unrecorded in a bosom that has been ever re-tentive of the kindnesses it has received; but whither am I wandering; I must change my subject, for, when gratitude is my theme, I am too apt to be prolix—once more then; having been left without any companion, and not being rich enough to throw open

open my doors to my acquaintance, nor poor enough to intrude myself into theirs, I found a positive necessity of passing a very large share of my time in solitude. This did not give me much uneasiness, 'till I discovered I possessed a mind, that must be employed, nor was I greatly alarmed even then; for I said, I have books, and I love them; they will not only amuse, but instruct me; but I soon found that I could not read for ever—my pencil, my needle were next applied to, but without the desired success, my thoughts took no part with my fingers—I grew serious, a thing not very usual with me;

X INTRODUCTION.

I found I should lose my spirits; I was now terrified, and began to puzzle my brain, to find out an employment that would alike save me from melancholy and mischief—After much deliberation, *It* recommended the writing of a novel, in which it kindly promised to assist me—The choice it made, convinced me how little I must expect from its assistance, but having no alternative, I followed its advice, though not altogether approving of it. And though I found my mentor extremely indolent and often deficient, I persisted, using such poor materials as could be furnished without

without labour, wishing to give healthful exercise to, but avoid wearing a friend, with whose weakness I had long been acquainted—Vexed as I was frequently, with the stupidity of my assistant, I persevered, because I knew that however unlikely my production was, to do good, it could not possibly do harm—moreover my purpose was at any rate, in a great measure answered, for though the dulness I have with so much reason complained of, sometimes made me dejected, it at least secured me from mischief, which I consider, as a very

material point gained in my present situation.

Should that World, to which, I presume to address myself, be dissatisfied with the excuse I have made; I shall still have the satisfaction to know that my friend, the gentle Reader, and more particularly, the Editor, will consider it, a very ample and sufficient one.

The long list of reviewers, may possibly be surprized, that I have not made mention of them, for which I beg to apologize, I consider them as a very instructing
and

and conspicuous part of that World, to whom I have applied myself—I will further add, if these gentlemen do but admire me, a thousandth part as much as I esteem, honour and revere them, I shall not fear to be immortal, —from the trifling knowledge I have of the patron I have selected, I am not over sanguine in my hopes of its protection. I shall therefore, only say, that I am the World's much, or little obliged,

Humble or Proud servant,

As it shall hereafter merit,
from the

AUTHOR.



From the

of the 12th of the month of June

At the office of the Secretary

to the Treasury, London

I am, Sir, very much obliged to you for the

information you have been good enough to

communicate to me, and I am very much

glad to hear that you are so well

and hope you will continue to be so

and I am, Sir, very much obliged to you for the

information you have been good enough to

VILLEROY;

OR, THE

FATAL MOMENT.

MISS MORDAUNT.

TO

MISS BEVILL.

MY MUCH LOVED HARRIET,

I SHOULD have sooner answered your last favour, but my wish to comply with the request it contained, and my want of spirits to attempt so arduous an undertaking have prevented my acquiescing with

B 6

that

that readiness I have been used to feel, when an opportunity offered, either to amuse, or oblige the friend of my heart. Let me confess to you; I, for some time, felt the most unconquerable reluctance, to disclose, even to you, my Harriet, the misfortunes of a beloved, unhappy, and dreadful, to say, guilty parent. But when I reflected, in whom this confidence was to be reposed, my scruples vanished: and I now feel a kind of consolation in the idea, that my Harriet will share my sorrows, and drop a tear of pity to the memory of my unfortunate mother; but as this is a subject I dare not trust myself with, I will hasten to assure you, that

I am with the most perfect friendship,

Your

CAROLINE MORDAUNT.

P. S. The



P. S. The papers inclosed, were written by Lady Frances herself, a few days before her death—I must intreat you to return them, as soon as perused, for they have been my constant companions; nor were they ever trusted, for a moment, to any hands but yours.

LADY FRANCES HENLY

TO

CAROLINE MORDAUNT.

(Inclosed in the foregoing.)

WHEN you read this, my Caroline, your unhappy mother will be no more—the hand of death is even now upon me; and the worthy Doctor Smith informs me, a
very

very few days must put an end to my weary pilgrimage.—Were it not for leaving you, my child, death would have no terrors—but when I reflect on your friendless situation, I could almost wish for life to guide your steps—but why talk I of guiding? I, that have fallen from an exalted station, from being the pride of an honourable family, to envy now, the lowliest amongst the virtuous of my sex—Oh! my child, my resolution to acquaint you with my unhappy story, almost fails me; and I feel a reluctance to reveal my crimes to you, that exceed description—may you, (if it be possible) not despise and hate the memory of her, who has been the author of her own calamities!—yes my Caroline, I have been the sole cause, not only of ruin to myself, but also of involving those, whose peace was dearer to me, than my own, in the destruction.—

You

You too, my child, are through the errors of your mother, left alone in a pitiless world, destitute of friends, and without fortune, nor have you, the example of a virtuous mother, in whose steps you might tread, and by whose life of piety you might regulate your own—No ! my Caroline, I have nothing to leave you, but the story of my miseries; you will there learn, that to depart from virtue, is to depart from happiness—of this I am a melancholy instance: for, from the first moment of my deviation from her paths, I have not known what peace was—no ray of comfort, has deigned to visit the dark mansion of my distressful bosom, even the smiles of my Caroline, have been daggers to my bleeding heart; but I will not shock you with recounting all my wretchedness; but proceed to relate to you, my ill-fated story.

THE

THE STORY OF

LADY FRANCES HENLY.

I AM the daughter of the Earl of E—— who having no other child to inherit his vast fortunes, looked up to me, as the support of his house—It is not then to be wondered at, if I became almost the only object of his attention; and all his hours were spent in forming schemes for my future felicity, which I too fatally have blasted. As he wished to see me superior to every other of my sex, he lost no opportunity that could contribute to my improvement—his house was open to every person of any extraordinary ability—his extreme fondness for me, made him view each little accomplishment I possessed, in a much more favourable light than it merited—the same fondness rendered him

Laura Weston

VILLEROY.

21

him blind to all my imperfections, and I was early taught to look upon myself as one that could not err.—My mother, dear offended shade! to think of thee, is to be plunged in an abyss of horror; but I will hope, that I have obtained your pardon; for surely, if thou hast beheld the severe repentance, and never ceasing sorrows of thy wretched child thou wilt think, though her punishment has been just, her atonement has been sufficient—but whether do I wander?—My mother, was a woman of uncommon beauty, and possessed of various perfections, but of a temper, violent in the extreme—The pride of birth, had taken possession of her heart, and she boasted a long race of noble progenitors, whose public and private virtues had done honour to their country; and she often exultingly rejoiced, that she had given a daughter to the world, whose worth

worth would spread additional lustre on her family.—At the age of sixteen, I was looked upon, as one who would fully answer the most sanguine expectations of my doting parents—As I was to be the inheritor of a splendid fortune, I received the homage of numbers of the young nobility; but as my parents perceived I was equally indifferent to them all, they did not press me on the subject of marriage, though there were several who made me offers of their hands, whose alliance would not have been displeasing to them—Thus had I, for the space of two years, continued the pride of every circle, and the leader of the fashionable world; when my father informed me, he had been solicited by Lord Henly, for permission to pay his addresses to me, and which, as his Lordship was in every respect what the fondest parent would wish to unite his child

child to—he had granted—at the same time requested, I would look upon his Lordship, as my destined husband, to which, he thought, I could have no objection, as I had ever assured him, my heart was free from every engagement—I answered, that I was equally indifferent to all mankind, and if Lord Henly met with his approbation, mine should follow—my father pressed me to his paternal bosom, with rapture, declaring, that every wish of his heart was now fulfilled.—My mother, whose joy was as great as his, fervently supplicated Heaven, but to prolong her days, till she would see me a parent, and then she should die contented; as the honour of her house would thereby be continued, by her having given birth to the most dutiful and accomplished of women—Oh! thou most unhappy, most mistaken of parents, you knew

knew not what you solicited, you knew not, that the completion of that prayer, was to involve you in insupportable calamity.—Heaven granted your petition—but not in mercy.—No, the Great Ruler of the universe made you an example, to teach erring mortals, how weak, how insufficient they are to judge what is best for them.— But to proceed; Lord Henly was too ardent a lover, to admit of unnecessary delays, and engaged, as I was, in fashionable folly; I never thought of examining my heart, as to its sentiments of the man, with whom I was to pass my future days.—At the end of six weeks I became his wife, without any other idea of the marriage state, than, that I was now mistress of all my actions, and at full liberty to pursue, what line of conduct was most pleasing to myself; and in this, I thought true happiness must consist

consist.—From this dream, I was soon awakened, by Lord Henly's requesting I would accompany him into the country; at the same time, informing me, of his detestation of a life of dissipation—He talked of the happiness we should enjoy at his seat, at R——, as its distance from any habitation, would secure us from the interruption of frequent visitors—I gazed at him, with astonishment, and without reply; 'till tenderly taking my hand, he said, he should then enjoy the company of his beloved wife, which in the whirl of distraction, in which he had lived, since our marriage, he had not been able to do—I hastily withdrew my hand, and with cold contempt, advised him to lose no time in putting in execution, the arcan scheme, his fertile imagination had projected; but begged, at the same time, he would make choice of some other Sil-

via

via to accompany him, as I preferred the whirl of dissipation (as he was pleased to term it) in which I lived, to conversing with lawns, listening to purling streams, or even to the voice of so delightful a shepherd, as I did not doubt, he would prove.—Lord Henly was struck dumb; but recollecting himself, he urged me to consider, as what he was willing to ask as a favour, he had a right to command as a duty.—Having said this, he retired, leaving me in a state of mind, I had never before experienced. To avoid my own thoughts, I made a visit to a fashionable friend; who soon perceived, that something had disturbed me, and on her questioning me, I confessed every thing that had passed.—She highly censured my Lord's conduct, and as much applauded mine, advising me, on no account, to be reconciled to him, unless he atoned for
his

his behaviour, by giving up every idea, entirely, of taking me into the country, besides apologizing, for having attempted it.

Determined to follow this pernicious advice, I returned home, when Lord Henly again renewed his entreaties, that I would consent to accompany him to R——, as he intended to leave London the ensuing week: but I was deaf to every solicitation. Accordingly, a few days after, I saw him depart, without me. From this moment I felt no other sentiment for him, than what mortified pride inspired—His wish to deter me from going into public, only increased my desire for it,—I thought it necessary to plunge into dissipation with double ardour, to convince the world and my Lord, how much my mind revolted at restraint.— I had

had been three months in this situation, when Lord Henly was appointed ambassador to the court of Spain, for which place he was to depart immediately—I saw the preparations making for his journey with pleasure, though he betrayed evident signs of a mind, ill at ease —The day of his leaving me, he came to my apartment, and after requesting I would dismiss my attendance; he pathetically lamented the unhappy turn I had taken, conjured me to reflect, with what evils it it would be attended if pursued in his absence, and concluded by solemnly exhorting me, if I valued his peace, to take this opportunity of paying the earl, my father, a visit. I gave him no reason to suppose I would comply with his desire, and he left me with a countenance of displeasure and inquietude. I lost no time in going to the friend, I had before mentioned,

mentioned, to communicate this fresh instance (as I termed it) of my lord's unreasonable disposition; for from the time of her having given me advice, so suited to my wishes, I looked upon her as my only real friend; I found with her, Sir Harry L——, a gentleman who had formerly asked me of my father in marriage, but had been refused on account of his immoral character.—I was too imprudent to conceal even from him the manner I had parted from Lord Henly.

From this moment he became my constant attendant, devoting himself to me, with the utmost assiduity: nor did I ever once reflect on the impropriety of my conduct, in thus receiving the attentions of a man, who had been my declared admirer, and with whose libertine principles I was

VOL. I.

C

well

well acquainted; but I consulted my own vanity alone, and that was flattered, by seeing myself distinguished by this leader of taste and gallantry, for such the frivolous of his own sex, and the vain and giddy of ours, had universally allowed him to be. One night after returning home from the opera (where he had more than commonly exerted himself to please me;) he complained of my coldness, and the long delay of his hopes, in such terms, as left me no room to doubt of what nature his expectations were—My pride was alarmed, and I resented the insult he had offered me, by the most contemptuous expressions my heart could dictate—He heard me without emotion or interruption, until seeing me quite exhausted with rage, he accosted, me with an air of the most cutting indifference,

“ he

“ he had thought,” he said, “ we understood each other well enough, to have rendered this explanation unnecessary, but he supposed it was a ceremony usual with Ladies, who wished their Lovers to know the value they would have set upon their favours; though he could not but think, that his long and ardent passion deserved to be rewarded, without his being loaded with such cruel and humiliating epithets as he had just heard—That, had not the encouragement I had hitherto given, convinced him of my generous intentions in his favour, my conduct this night, would have made him the most wretched of men, as he should have supposed, he had been so unfortunate as to have really offended me”—I perceived he was approaching me, I rose precipitately from my seat, and with a look of the ut-

most indignation, and a voice which rage and surprize had rendered almost inarticulate, I bid him stop his detested tongue, and leave my house that moment, nor ever more presume to enter its doors.—

He said “He could easily obey my commands, but before he went, never to return, must beg to congratulate my Ladyship, on my present virtuous disposition: as for him, poor discarded man, he must content himself with the opinion of the world, which had long believed him in possession of every favour, it was in the power of the wife of Lord Henley to bestow.”

I repeated my desire, that he should withdraw, telling him, with an affected calmness, that it should be my business, to convince that world he spoke of, how
greatly

greatly it had injured me, if it had ever entertained an idea, that the wife of Lord Henry could fall so very low, as to bestow one thought upon so poor, mean, and despicable a wretch, as it must allow him to be.—I now rang my bell,—a servant appearing, I desired he would shew Sir Harry L—— out,—He went immediately, saying something of revenge, to which I paid no attention.

I will not attempt to describe the horror and confusion that filled my bosom, the virtuous mind can alone conceive what I felt—mine was then virtuous, for though it had been clouded and obscured by a life of folly, my heart was not naturally depraved; it shuddered at the idea of actual guilt.—I retired to my apartment, where a torrent of tears gave me some relief,

C 3

and

and for the first moment in my life, reflected on my past conduct—Though I found nothing in it which could deserve the insult I received, yet there was nothing my reason could approve—I passed the night in making resolutions, to be more circumspect in future; in these resolutions, the following day confirmed me, for while I was hesitating what to do, whether to go abroad, or stay at home, Lady Lessly, a sister of my mother's, was announced—I could not avoid receiving her, though in my present state of mind, I dreaded every eye—She accosted me, with a look of severity, and produced the paper of the day, bid me read (if I had not already done it) the infamy of two noble families, brought on them, by the imprudent and unpardonable conduct of one unworthy female—At any other time of
my

my life, such an address would have been received with contempt, but I now felt myself humbled and disturbed, with fears of I knew not what.—I took the paper, in silence, and casting my eyes to where I was directed; to my confusion and mortification, I read the following paragraph:

“ Last night set off for the Continent, on a love expedition, the long enamoured Lady Margaret P—f—t and the gallant Colonel S—l—g—r: we are happy to find Lord P. bears this instance of his Lady’s infidelity, as a thing, he, as well as the rest of the world had expected— We are authorized to say, they were not accompanied (as is reported) by Sir Harry L— and the beautiful Lady F— H—. Her Ladyship having
C 4 taken

taken exception at some attentions paid to another last night at the opera; upbraided the intended companion of her flight with such spirit, as alarmed the Baronet, and made him judge it proper, at least to defer their expedition; of which he acquainted the lady, and was forbidden evermore to enter her house.—It is thought this command will not greatly affect this idol of the female world, as he has been observed for some time, to fail in his devotions at her Ladyship's shrine.

I tore the paper into a thousand pieces, —I raved—I ran about the apartment, like a person in a fit of frenzy.—My aunt, terrified at the situation I was in, entreated me to be composed, and inform her of the truth of this affair; that measures might be taken, to prevent the consequences

quences that would follow from Lord Henly's family; who would undoubtedly think it incumbent on them, to acquaint his Lordship, with the disgrace I had brought on him.—This, far from calming, added if possible to my fury—I spurned at the idea, of regarding, even for a moment what Lord Henly's family should do or think—I told her, I knew myself innocent, and that I had not respect enough for any of those she had named, to be anxious about their opinion—She then mentioned my father, and asked, “ Would I not wish to make him happy by proving my innocence, if I really was so ? ”—This brought me to reason, and I assured her solemnly, that the whole of the paragraph I believed to be false: but what immediately respected myself, was an infamous libel.—We now consulted what was best

to be done. At length my aunt said, she saw no better way, at once to shew the falsity of the report, than by appearing that very evening in public, with Sir Harry; and much as she had ever wished me to avoid him, she would now advise me to send and request his attendance.—This was too much; I burst into tears, and declared she had proposed an impossibility; that Sir Harry was a wretch, with whom I would never more hold converse.—Lady Lessy replied, if this was true, the remainder of the paragraph would hardly admit of doubt.—I saw no way of clearing her suspicions, but acquainting her with the truth.—I therefore related the whole humiliating circumstance of my breach with Sir Harry, which she heard with the utmost indignation against him, and kindly assured

assured me, that nothing in her power should be wanting, to convince my parents, how undeserving I was, of the infamous attack, which had at first been made against my honour, and failing of success in that, had with the blackest malice fallen on my character—She proposed making a few visits among our acquaintance, to observe in what manner the report had been received, to which I consented, and she left me.

I awaited her return with impatience—I was amazed I had neither seen or heard of Lady Margaret P—f—t (this is the female friend I have before mentioned) I concluded she must be taken up with confuting the slander, with which she had been so unjustly loaded.—Lady Lessly's entrance, put an end to my con-

C 6 jectures ;

jeſtures; at ſight of me, ſhe burſt into tears, and aſſured me that this had been the moſt unpleasant morning of her life, and that ſhe dreaded giving me the particulars.—I entreated her to relate every thing that had paſſed—She proceeded to inform me, that the report, concerning Lady P—f—t, was ſtrictly true, and that concerning me, as ſtrictly believed to be ſo, by every one, except Lord Henley's father, who had given ſuch a reaſon for his diſbelief, as had ſhocked her very ſoul: ſhe ſaid ſhe had called upon ſeveral of our acquaintance, moſt of whom ſeemed ſurprized at ſeeing her—Some conſoled with her, others pitied me; ſome adviſed her not to make herſelf unhappy, but forget ſhe had ſuch an undeſerving relation—one cried, what would become of my parents! another, poor Lord Henley!

ley! but it appeared to be the general opinion, that all my friends must have expected what happened, as every one of them had long foreseen it.—Tired out with their impertinence, she was returning home, when meeting with a particular friend, she ventured to communicate the affair to him, as it really was—He heard her with attention, and then assured her, that he implicitly believed every word she had said, but he would not flatter her, that the generality of the world would do the same, as he had ever observed, that malice and detraction were most completely gratified, when the object of their vengeance had been placed on an eminence, that precluded their ever being on a level by any other means, than by pulling it down—That Lady Henly was young, beautiful and noble, these made her a
mark

mark for envy—She was indiscreet and haughty, these left her open to its most envenomed shafts—He however advised her, disagreeable as it must be, to acquaint my father-in-law, with all the baseness of Sir Harry's conduct—She accordingly waited on the Earl, who received her with great politeness—As soon as she was seated, she addressed herself to him, by saying, she had just left her niece, who was a good deal distressed, at an infamous attack that had been made on her in a paper of that day; she was proceeding, when he interrupted her, "I perceive," said he, "that your Ladyship is going to attempt a vindication of one, whose near relationship to you, could alone make such an undertaking pardonable, but I beseech you, Madam, spare yourself the mortification of repeating, and

and me of hearing, what cannot possibly obtain the smallest degree of credit. Lady Henly (as I am unhappily compelled to call her) has long been the mistress of her own conduct; she is still so, nor do I think myself authorized to take any step in this affair, until I have received instructions from my unfortunate son."

Lady Lesly again attempted to speak, and said, " my Lord, I assure you, the account of the quarrel between Sir Harry L—— and Lady Frances—" " is not true," replied the Earl; " you, Madam, may inform her Ladyship (if that will afford her the least consolation) that I know it is not"—then rising, and respectfully taking her hand, he continued, " I would not distress you, Lady Lesly, but the dishonour brought on our families, by the too
glaring

mark for envy—She was indiscreet and haughty, these left her open to its most envenomed shafts—He however advised her, disagreeable as it must be, to acquaint my father-in-law, with all the baseness of Sir Harry's conduct—She accordingly waited on the Earl, who received her with great politeness—As soon as she was seated, she addressed herself to him, by saying, she had just left her niece, who was a good deal distressed, at an infamous attack that had been made on her in a paper of that day; she was proceeding, when he interrupted her, "I perceive," said he, "that your Ladyship is going to attempt a vindication of one, whose near relationship to you, could alone make such an undertaking pardonable, but I beseech you, Madam, spare yourself the mortification of repeating, and

and me of hearing, what cannot possibly obtain the smallest degree of credit. Lady Henly (as I am unhappily compelled to call her) has long been the mistress of her own conduct; she is still so, nor do I think myself authorized to take any step in this affair, until I have received instructions from my unfortunate son."

Lady Lessy again attempted to speak, and said, " my Lord, I assure you, the account of the quarrel between Sir Harry L—— and Lady Frances—" " is not true," replied the Earl; " you, Madam, may inform her Ladyship (if that will afford her the least consolation) that I know it is not"—then rising, and respectfully taking her hand, he continued, " I would not distress you, Lady Lessy, but the dishonour brought on our families, by the too glaring

glaring indiscretions of this imprudent woman, can no longer remain concealed—I was not the only witness this morning to that villain stealing, like a thief, from her house, at the approach of day—He was indeed disguised, but my sword should have acquainted him he was known. had I not thought, his person sacred to the vengeance of an injured husband—Yes, Lady Lessy, I was witness to the infamy of your niece, and the ruin of my gallant son—It was not until after repeated information of Sir Harry's constant and unseasonable visits, that I ventured to pay any regard to the report—I at length considered it was a duty I owed Lord Henly, to examine the conduct of his wife, that I might, if I saw occasion, warn him of his danger, if not, that I might be able to attest her innocence—with this design,

design, I condescended to act the spy:—I saw them at the opera together, from whence he attended her home—I followed, and in a short time his carriage drove to her door.—As I did not doubt, but it was to take him away, I spared not to reflect on the censoriousness of the world, that would not permit a beautiful and virtuous woman, to partake of the innocent pleasures of life in the absence of her husband:—I could not but view this as a great hardship, that because a woman was deprived of the greatest comfort, every lesser one must likewise be denied her.—I resolved in future to discountenance all those who should presume to insinuate any thing to her Ladyship's prejudice— with these sentiments I was going to leave the place, when to my great mortification, I saw the carriage drive off without Sir

Harry

Harry—it was likewise very visible, that his servants intended it should be supposed their master was in it, for they stood with the door open, and their hats off, as if attending his getting in, and then mounted behind.—This appearance of deceit alarmed me, and I determined to await his departure—I accordingly placed myself in such a manner, that I must see every one that came from Lord Henly's house.—I had waited until the clock struck six, and now supposing I must have been mistaken, and that he had really been in the carriage, and being worn out with fatigue and want of rest, I was again preparing to return home, when I saw the door open, and a man come out, muffled up in such a manner, as would have made it difficult to know him, had he not let something fall, in stooping to regain which

which, the loose cloak he wore, fell off, and discovered who he was—He instantly fled, whilst I, with an almost broken heart, followed with intention to take immediate vengeance on the wretch.—I had the confusion, as I passed, to find several others had been observers as well as myself, and of course reflected, that my son's shame must now be made public; I therefore thought, in justice to him, I should leave it to his arm to inflict the punishment.—with this determination, I returned home, and have just dispatched a letter, conveying this distressful intelligence to the Earl of E——: I hope Lady Lessly will do me the justice to believe, that I am a partaker in the sorrow of her and her noble family, and that I deeply feel the wound I have been compelled to inflict, by giving this information." Here the Earl was prevented proceeding

proceeding further by the entrance of company, and my aunt finding herself unequal to the task of conversing, thought it best to withdraw, and take another opportunity to attempt my vindication.—A thousand times, during this recital, I was on the point of interrupting her, to give vent to the rage that oppressed my heart, and it was with inconceivable efforts I prevailed over myself, so far, as to remain silent until she had concluded her narration.—I now gave a loose to the bitterest reproaches against my defamer, and asserted that the Earl had forged the whole of this infamous falsehood,—to prove this, I desired the footman who attended Sir Harry to the door, might be called—upon his coming in, I inquired what hour it was when Sir Harry L—— left the house last night, he answered, that he believed it

it was near six in the morning, as he had waited in the dining parlour more than three hours for his carriage, but that he was obliged to walk home at last, as it never came—I desired to know why I had not been informed of this ; the man said, Sir Henry had particularly requested I might not, as it would keep me up—I then demanded in what manner Sir Harry had departed, he replied, that he had refused any attendance, but had taken a hat and cloak from the parlour to prevent his being known, as he said he was fearful that it might be noticed, if he was seen to go from my house at that hour—I was now convinced the Earl had only related facts, and that appearances were strongly against me,—a moment's consideration shewed me the whole to be a contrivance of this most artful and inhuman of men—I likewise saw

saw his motive was not entirely revenge, as the scheme was evidently formed, before I had given him any cause that he could use as an excuse for his malice—I should therefore have fallen, at all events, a victim to his pride or his resentment.—I cannot proceed, my Caroline, without first warning you, as you value your future peace, to fly the company of that man, whatever be his rank or station, his abilities or accomplishments, who makes a jest of religion and morality.—Be assured, that every attempt to weaken your opinion of these sacred subjects, has a design on your happiness—Listen not to his professions he courts but to destroy—avoid him as a wretch, who, either from the weakness of his head, or the depravity of his heart, is unworthy of your regard ;—Such was the man, of whose attentions I had been

been vain, and with the wit of whose conversation I had been delighted.—It is not without horror, I at this moment recall to my mind, the mirth I have joined in, when I have heard this being, devoid of every principle of virtue, exhaust talents that would have done honour to a better cause, in turning into ridicule, the most solemn subjects and most essential duties.—Heaven has made him a sharer in the punishment, which he has eventually been the cause of being inflicted upon me.—But to return:—Lady Lessly wrote my father every particular I have related, and I awaited his answer, without any fears of his resentment, as I did not doubt but he would readily credit, what I myself knew to be true.—But how was I disappointed! when I received a letter from my mother, breathing nothing but the

the most bitter reproaches ; accusing me of having brought infamy upon my family, loading me with the most cruel epithets, and renouncing all connection with me,—She concluded by telling me, that my father was too much incensed to trust himself to write.

I had now no friend but Lady Lessly, who easily prevailed on me, to consent to retire into the country ; but I would not hear of a proposal she made to me, to go to my father's, who she said would then be convinced of my innocence.—My spirit was too haughty to supplicate him to receive me, and after the letter I had received I could not go without.—I fixed for my residence upon the seat Lord Henly had impartuned me to go to,—At my request, my aunt consented to accompany me, and

and we left London in a few days.—But before my departure, I made an effort to regain my consequence, by appearing in public—Lady Lessly greatly disapproved of this step; but as I was not to be dissuaded from it, she condescended to accompany me to the play.—The mortification I there met with, effectually silenced every regret I had felt at leaving town:—on our entering the house, I was the object of universal attention—whisperings and smiles of contempt were seen in every box—many females who had formerly watched for an opportunity to pay their respects to me, now affected to avert their faces, and the disrespectful stare of the men confronted me;—soon after we had seated ourselves, Lady Lessly perceiving Lord Henly's father and family in an opposite box, arose, and paid her compliments to

the Earl and his lady, which were most respectfully returned by both—I followed her example, but no notice was taken,—my chagrin was infinitely great, but I was still to experience greater;—at that moment Sir Harry L——’s places were called for, and to compleat my distress, they were in the next box,—The greater part of the audience were now entirely engrossed, by attending to every look of mine—it was more than I could endure,—my powers forsook me, and I fell senseless from my seat:—in this situation I was carried out of the house, by a gentleman, who had been lead by his humanity, to my assistance.—On my recovering, I found myself in the lobby, surrounded by a number of men; but not one of my own sex (except my aunt) had deigned to afford me any relief.—The stranger, who had
until

until then been taken up with my illness, now observed the crowd, by which I was encompassed, and politely hinted that all danger being over, he supposed it would be more agreeable to the lady to be left with her friend: he then took directions from Lady Lesly, whose carriage he should inquire for, and withdrew,—some others followed his example, but the greater part pressed nearer to me, and added to my vexation, by their condolence and offers of service:—I was considering in what manner to disengage myself from these importunents, when Captain Villeroy (for that was the stranger's name) entered the lobby, and addressing Lady Lesly, informed her that her carriage was not in waiting, but that he had procured a hackney coach, if she would permit him the honour of conducting her to it.—I hastily addressed

Lady Lesly, "do, dear Madam, go in anything or to any place, that will release me from this company"—Lady Lesly, on this, gave him her hand; I attempted to follow but those gentlemen not making way for me to pass, I was constrained to remain where I was,—Our conductor looking back, perceived my situation and hurrying his charge into the carriage he had provided, in an instant returned, making his way to me, by indignantly pushing aside those that impeded him, at which they discovered no other sign of resentment, than a loud laugh, and a few insulting winks and nods, with now and then an exclamation "Lucky dog! a devilish fine woman! how I envy Sir Harry!"—at length my protector darting a disdainful look around him, said in an angry tone "By what name shall I call you?"

you? for you are neither gentlemen or men; but such as you are, I shall return to you."—I now proceeded without further molestation, and after placing me with Lady Lessy, he took his leave, and we returned home.

I soon retired to bed, but not to rest.—After a night spent in the most tumultuous reflections, (among which the idea of my amiable protector was too often present)—I arose, and found my aunt waiting for me: she was prepared for our journey, which he advised me not to delay—she assured me, not a newspaper would be seen, or a conversation heard, that would not turn upon the unfortunate business of the play.—I needed not much persuasion to induce me to leave a place, made hateful to me, by the un-

merited insults I had received—We accordingly departed the evening of that day. Shall I venture to disclose to my Caroline, that I had invented excuses to detain us some hours longer in London, than were necessary, in the hope that Captain Villeroi would have taken advantage of the opportunity, that the last night afforded him, to have made a visit at my house—In this hope I was disappointed, for a card, addressed to Lady Lessly, inquiring after her's and my health, was the only notice taken by him.—On our arrival at N——, we were waited on by the neighbouring gentlemen, but as I had given orders to be refused to every person, and did not return their visits, we lived in a state of absolute solitude,—the want of other amusement, induced me to spend much of my time in walking, an exercise I once thought

thought intolerable, but which I now grew very fond of.

The season of the year was fast approaching, in which nature appears in all its charms, when one evening, induced by the uncommon serenity of the air, and the delightful songsters that saluted me from almost every bush, I lengthened my walk beyond its usual bounds,—I once on looking back, perceived a man at some distance, but he soon disappeared, and I concluded it to be one of my household, who on seeing me had retired—I paid no attention, but continued my walk, until I entered a wood, when hearing a voice pronounce my name, I hastily turned to see from whence it came, when to my extreme terror and astonishment, I saw Sir Harry L——: he approached me, and falling

on his knees, desired I would at last look with pity on a man whose ardent passion for me, neither distance or ill-usage had been able to subdue.—I steadfastly surveyed him for a moment, then summoning all the courage I was mistress of, said,

“ Sir Harry, if my countenance has any correspondence with my heart, it has told you the contempt I feel for you ; but least it should not have been a faithful interpreter, my tongue shall inform you, that, of all mankind you are the lowest in my opinion, and if I have ever bestowed any marks of favour on you, it has been because I thought you thrown, by nature, at too great a distance from me, ever to receive them in any other light, than as very great condescensions, for which you was bound to feel the most humble gratitude : but as I find you have mistaken my pity for

for kinder sentiments, and have dared to insult me with the offer of your love, it is a duty I owe myself to publish to the world, as well as to you, that from the inmost recesses of my soul, I scorn you; and must insist, you never more humble me, by the offer of your heart, a heart that I must ever despise.

With a countenance, distorted by rage, and a menacing voice and manner, he bid me beware how I further provoked him, as I was in his power—I turned from him with contempt, and directed my steps towards the place I had entered at—He remained fixed for a moment then suddenly pursuing, he clasped me in his arms—I shrieked aloud—my pride now gave way to fear—I wept and entreated, but in vain—I gave myself over for lost;

D 5 when

when a voice at some distance, crying, "Desist thou cowardly villain, or this moment 's thy last," made the wretch release me, and taking a pistol from his pocket, discharged it at the person who had spoke, and who was advancing towards us.—I waited not to know the fate of my defender, but fled with the utmost speed, until breathless with fatigue, I sunk lifeless on the ground.—On the return of my senses, I found myself supported by a man, who was using every means in his power for my recovery.—I dared not to look up, dreading to find the vile Sir Harry the instrument, by whose assistance I again lived; but who can describe the joy and astonishment I felt, when I discovered the voice to be, that of Captain Villeroy.—I threw myself at his feet in an agony of gratitude, but I could find

no

no words that would do justice to my feelings, and I burst into tears.—He raised me from the ground with the most delicate tenderness, and requested me to be composed, and allow him to conduct me home, as the night was advancing and he feared greatly for my health after the illness I had suffered.

On our way, I begged to know if he had escaped being hurt; he assured me he had.—I then requested he would inform me, what he had done with the infamous Sir Harry.—He told me, that Sir Harry had received a wound from his pistol, which he had been obliged to discharge in his own defence, that he had given him to the care of a servant of Lord M——'s who had attended at some distance with his horse, while he had, most

D 6 fortunately,

fortunately, walked round the adjacent country, and that the servant had conducted him to Lord M——'s house, it being the nearest.—He likewise acquainted me, that he was on a visit to his Lordship, who was his relation.

We had now reached my house: at taking leave, I expressed a wish that this affair might not be made public.—He desired me to rest satisfied it should not, as he had given the servant, in Sir Harry's hearing, room to suppose there had been a duel, which for his own sake, he would never contradict; and that as to himself, I might depend upon his silence.—He said, he imagined I should be anxious to know the fate of this unworthy man, notwithstanding the baseness of his conduct, "Would I therefore, permit him the honour

honour of paying his respects to me, with the information?"—Most gladly would I have complied with his request, but my having refused admittance to all company, rendered it impossible.—I acquainted him how I was situated; but added, that such was my anxiety on this occasion, that I would request him, (if the favour was not too great) to walk near a place which I pointed out, to which I would in future direct my evening visits—He replied that I might depend on my commands being obeyed, and departed.

I found Lady Lessy greatly alarmed at my staying out so late—The servants had been dispatched in search of me, but not entering the wood had missed me; I feigned some excuse which satisfied her Ladyship, who only chided me for risking

ing my health, by encountering the dews of the evening.

The gross insult I had received from Sir Harry, was entirely forgot, or only remembered as the cause that renewed my acquaintance with the now ardently beloved Villeroy. I waited with the utmost impatience for the following evening, and began my walk earlier than was my custom, endeavouring to persuade myself, that motives of humanity impelled me to be thus eager.

I found my protector waiting my coming—he informed me that Sir Harry was not in any danger, and intended in a day or two to return to London; that he had eagerly embraced the hint of the duel and was extremely anxious it should not be contradicted.

contradicted.—It was again late before we separated; both seemed sensible of the impropriety of remaining together so long—but both wanted resolution to part: I, at last tore myself from him, but with a promise to see him the next day.—Thus for several weeks, did I continue to drink of a delicious, but deadly poison, that was destruction to my peace.

One morning as I was returning from a visit to a neighbouring cottage, where I had been to alleviate the distresses of its inhabitants for I was no longer deaf to the voice of misery, or regardless of the calamities of my fellow creatures, my heart was susceptible of every tender impression—I had a tear for pity, and a hand to relieve all, where misfortunes could claim compassion:—Villeroy had taught

taught me the fine feelings of humanity, and I blushed that I had not known them before; but he had likewise taught me to know, from sad experience, that wealth and grandeur, dignity and power, were insufficient to insure happiness; and that a splendid wretchedness was all that lost woman could hope for, who had united herself with a man, from no other motive, than his being equal or superior in rank and fortune;—Oh! Caroline, I could dwell long on this subject,—but I will proceed:—As I drew near the road side, I saw a person on horse-back at some distance, whose horse had taken fright; the rider vainly endeavoured to stop him: he flew with the impetuosity of a whirlwind, until he came near where I stood observing him, then suddenly plunging, threw his rider to the ground,—As I had only

only a female attendant with me, I defired her to haften back to the cottage and procure affiftance; in the mean time I drew near the fufferer, when—Oh God!—how great was my furprize at beholding the adored Villeroy ftretched out—to all appearance dead,—I threw myfelf befide him, uttering the moft dreadful lamentations, and imploring heaven to take a life, that was no longer defirable.—Thus had I continued for fome time,—when lifting my face from the ground, I perceived him gazing ardently at me;—my joy was now as extravagant as my grief had been, until recollecting, I had difclofed the fecret of my heart, I was overcome with confufion.—He thanked me for the regard I had fhown, and affured me, he had only been ftunned by the fall—I did not dare to meet his eye—
—he

—he perceived my distress, and aking my hand, pressed it to his lips, saying, “If the happiest moment of my life, is to be the cause of making one hour of yours uneasy, it will greatly diminish the exquisite rapture I feel, at the knowledge, I have by this accident, acquired, a knowledge which will cheer my future hours, and make me forget the misery of the past;—for Oh! Lady Henly, I have long loved you, even in the arms of your husband, I adored you,—yes, before you was his, you were every thing to me.”—I reclined my head upon his bosom, and exclaimed,—Before I was his!—Oh! Villeroy, why was I not before made acquainted with this? I should have been the most blessed, as I am now the most miserable of human beings——“Say not,” he replied, “dearest of women, say not. . . . the

the most miserable, I cannot bear it: to purchase your peace, I would cheerfully sacrifice my own—Had not Fortune cruelly thrown a bar between us, I might now have been in possession of all my soul holds dear; but beggar as I am, what hopes had I of success,—had I made known my presumptuous passion,—had I even dared to think it possible, I might obtain your heart, how could I have requested your father to have given his beloved, his only child, the inheritance of his vast wealth, to a man, who though born of a noble family, was through the prodigality of his ancestors, reduced to enter into the service of his sovereign for support?—Oh! Lady Henly, to have called you mine, would have been to be happy beyond the lot of man; instead of which,

no

no fun has risen, since you gave yourself to another, that I have not beheld with reluctance——

My attendant now appearing in sight, we separated—I went to meet her, and telling the people she had brought, that the gentlemen had received no hurt,—I returned home.—Our meetings were continued as usual, every one of which served but to increase the fatal passion, that had now taken entire possession of my heart, and drove from thence every recollection of the past, and care for the future, nor had I a thought, that was not centered in this object of my fondest adoration——Happy, happy were those days, nor had I formed one wish beyond them, or even recollected, that they could not last;—when one evening, on my arrival
at

at the place of our meeting, I found Villeroy waiting my coming, but very different from our former interviews,—he flew not to meet, but appeared fixed to the spot,—his face was pale, and his voice trembled as he spoke. I eagerly inquired the cause;—he led me, without answering, to an arbour, then holding a letter in his hand,—“This paper Lady Frances,” said he, “will do what I cannot, it will inform you why I am overwhelmed with wretchedness.”—I hastily took it,—it contained an order from his commanding officer to join his regiment, with the utmost expedition, assuring him, he had already suffered in the opinion of his brother officers, by his delay, and that nothing but his great friendship for him, could have prevailed on him to screen him so long, as they were to embark in two days for foreign

foreign service."—To describe the sensation this intelligence gave me, is utterly impossible;—I sunk into the arms of the afflicted Villeroy, and gave a loose to all the tenderness of my soul;—Reason forsok me, and I became a lost guilty wretch.

Suffer me, my child, to draw a veil over the scene that followed, suffice it to say, the partner of my infamy, was not less miserable than your ruined mother.—I at length gained fortitude enough to insist on an eternal separation, charging him, in the most solemn manner, as he valued my future peace, or my affection, while he had life, never to attempt to see or correspond with me, protesting, by every sacred power, that the moment he did either, I would renounce him for ever, nor even
remember

remember him in my prayers, when I petitioned heaven for mercy on our crime——We parted; I approached the house I had lately left—but gracious God! with what very different emotions!—I hesitated at the door, fear of, I knew not what, prevented my entering;—night was coming on,—I knew not what to do—the darkness terrified me—I found I must no longer trust myself with my own thoughts, therefore darkness, which until this moment of my life had passed unnoticed, was now my greatest enemy.

I again attempted to enter, when the idea of my aunt inquiring the cause of my distress (which I felt no exertions could conceal) made me turn away with horror from the house.

I had

I had wandered some distance, unknowing where to direct my steps when I heard a voice requesting me to stop, it was one of my servants, who out of breath informed me, he had been every where in search of me, that Lady Lessly had fallen into a fit, that she had on her recovery, earnestly desired to see me, but that he feared she would not live until I reached home.—I waited not to reply;—my own cares were forgot, and I returned to the habitation I had conceived such a dread to enter, with the utmost speed:—I found my valued relation insensible to every thing round her, and to all appearance dying:—This was a sight that in my happiest moments would have greatly affected me, as I had always borne her the most unfeigned regard;—Judge then, what must have been my feelings

feelings at this time, when my mind was softened with a deep sense of my own wretchedness—Oh! with what joy would I have changed situations with this best of women, and should have thought my life but a small recompence—might I, by the forfeiture, prolong hers.

I remained by her bed-side, absorbed in grief until the arrival of several physicians, who had been sent for to the neighbouring towns, obliged me to withdraw.—The use I made of this interval, was to write to the destroyer of my peace and honour, enforcing the injunctions I had already imposed and conjured him to drive me from his thoughts, as I assured him, he should no longer possess a place in mine.

I had just committed this letter to a messenger, when word was brought me, that Lady Lessy had expressed a wish to see me—I flew to her apartment, where I found her somewhat recovered; my joy broke forth in the most extravagant caresses and congratulations, until warned by the physicians, that the violence of my transports would be prejudicial to the patient, who was still in great danger.—Their opinion proved too well founded, for in less than an hour she relapsed, and for two months every human effort was deemed insufficient to preserve her. During all this while I never quitted her room, but when compelled by her earnest request, for her own situation, dreadful as it was, could not stifle her anxiety for my health. To my affection and tenderness for this worthy relation, do I owe my now
being

being able to write this narrative of my unhappy life; as my anxiety for her, first drew me from myself, and saved me for a time from the horror of contemplating my fallen state,—nor was this all—her piety and resignation to the will of Heaven, her patience under her sufferings, which made even the beholders wonder, had deeply impressed my heart with a sense of religion, and the duty I owed my Maker. —I reflected with confusion on my past life, and determined to atone for the follies and crimes of it, by my future contrition and amendment.

I had great struggles with myself, in regard to the conduct I should pursue with Lord Henly—whether to confess my crime, and throw myself on his generosity, or to conceal it from him, and by dedicating

the remainder of my days to his happiness, make all the reparation in my power.

There was a meanness in the latter idea, that my haughty soul repulsed with scorn, --but, in the former there was destruction:--to declare myself infamous to the man, whom I had treated with the most unfeeling contempt; to become an object of pity or revenge was equally dreadful, for I felt it impossible, let his conduct be ever so guarded, but that in his heart he must despise me:--Thus did I wage with conflicting passions, without being able to form any determination, until the idea of the disgrace and misery I should bring upon my family, and even on the innocent, though injured Lord Henly, made me resolve to bury the unhappy secret in my own bosom. I had no sooner
come

come to this resolution, than I found some relief, from the load that had bowed me to the earth ;—But Heaven, that is always just, did not suffer me long to enjoy that peace, of which I was undeserving ; for a short time too fatally convinced me that my shame was inevitable, and that my crime would be my punishment.

The horror of this discovery, was more than I could support—my constitution sunk under it, and the deprivation of reason, which followed, was a state of the most supreme felicity, to what I endured while I had the power of feeling my misery.—I continued six weeks in a delirium, until at length my strength being entirely exhausted, I sunk into a state of

E 2 stupefaction,

stupefaction, which by calming my mind, was instrumental to my recovery.

I was at last pronounced out of danger, and was happy to find, that my illness had been ascribed to the anxiety I had suffered on my aunt's account, and my too close attendance on her.—A return of sense, again brought all the horrors of my situation to my view—I saw that nothing but my death, could conceal my infamy, —this was within my reach, but I felt I was unfit to die—I found none of that pious resignation and cheerful hope, that made death appear lovely in the dying Lady Lessy, inhabited my bosom—all there was anarchy and despair.—I would have implored Heaven for mercy, but my prayers were checked, by the recollection, that the unfortunate sharer of my guilt, was

was still dear to my heart, and that every effort to drive him thence, seemed but to render him more a partner of it.

The necessity of coming to some determination,—compelled me to resolve on flight; but the extreme weakness I still laboured under, rendered flight at this time impossible; but by serving as an excuse for not quitting my room, it enabled me to conceal my unhappy situation.—I was one day reflecting, in how short a time I must abandon every friend and relation, and commit myself to a world, to which I was a total stranger; when my aunt entered my apartment; her benignant countenance beaming with delight, she tenderly embraced me, saying, she had brought me news, that would make me quite well; that a few days ago she had

wrote my father of my illness and recovery, and had this moment received an answer to her letter, informing her, that he would not lose a moment in coming himself, and bringing my mother to press their beloved Frances to their bosoms, as they would be wretched until they had obtained her forgiveness, for their past severity,—this was too much,—I fainted in Lady Lessly's arms.

On my recovery, I found this deluded friend in an agony of grief, accusing herself of having killed me, by her folly, in so suddenly telling me the joyful tidings. —After a little recollection, I feigned a desire to sleep, and requested to be left alone for that purpose, desiring not to be disturbed until I should ring for my woman, as I wished to prepare myself by rest,

rest, to receive my parents. My request was complied with, and I was left to my own reflections—in those I was left to punishment sufficient, for never did the sun in all its course behold so very lost a wretch, as your unhappy mother now was.

I threw myself on my knees, to implore the protection of Heaven.—At that moment, I thought I heard the noise of a carriage enter the court :—I started from the posture I was in, and precipitately hurrying to the stairs, I paused there awhile—all was silent—I ventured down, and passed the outward door unperceived, which I shut after me. I now found myself endued with fresh strength and courage; I had just reached the last ^{gate}

I had to pass, from which I dreaded any obstruction and found it open.

I presumed now to think that Heaven had favoured my design ; when lifting up my eyes, at the sound of horses—I had just life to perceive that it was my father's carriage, and to hear my mother's voice, calling to the servants to open the door, as she saw Lady Henly coming to meet her—I heard no more—Happy had I been, wretch that I was, and thrice happy all those who were so unfortunate as to be connected with me, had I never more beheld the light of Heaven,—But I was reserved to expiate my crimes, by the greatness of my sufferings.

I was conveyed back to the house, insensible to all that passed. The shock I received,

received, brought on a premature labour, and I was restored to life in the same moment, that by giving birth to my Caroline, stamped me with indelible infamy. The recollection of the scene I must now describe shakes my whole frame, and at the distance of eighteen years, causes every vein in my unhealed heart to bleed afresh; but I will hasten to perform this my last act of penance and self humiliation; for surely to reveal such crimes as mine, to a beloved child, perhaps to deprive myself of the only tear that would have fallen on my grave, and even have my memory held in abhorrence, may be termed acts of the severest penance and humiliation; but I have imposed the task, and in spite of the struggles of my bleeding bosom, I will fulfil it.

The alarm of my being brought home in such a situation, occasioned my room to be crowded with attendance, every one of which were struck dumb with astonishment, at this unexpected proof of my infamy.—My mother was the first to recover the use of her faculties—She, with composure in her countenance, drew near my bed, and kneeling down, with hands and eyes raised to heaven, with steady voice, solemnly implored the Almighty to record a parent's curse, and make it effectual here and hereafter.

Struck with horror, I attempted to clasp her in my arms; she avoided my embrace, and rushing into the adjoining apartment, she threw herself on the floor, in all the agony of despair—Her violence occasioned the bursting of a blood vessel,
of

of which this unfortunate parent expired in a few moments.

What followed for several days, I knew not, as I was deprived of sense and motion; but when I was supposed to be beyond the reach of human misery, to fulfil the immutable decrees of Providence, I was once more compelled to behold the light.—I found my aunt weeping by my bedside—I could not endure to behold sorrow, of which I was the unworthy cause, and as I had not been perceived, I again closed my eyes:—A short time after, my woman entered with a request from my father, to see Lady Lessy.

This was a balm to my heart, as it gave assurance that one parent yet lived. My kind aunt, on retiring, left me to the
care

care of the person who had just entered, who took her place beside me, and entering into conversation with another attendant who was in the room, she informed her that the Earl had received dispatches from Lord Henly, that he was on the road, and expected every day—she added that she hardly wished her poor lady to recover now, as she was certain, from her knowledge of her disposition, that death would be preferable to such a meeting as this must be.

The misery I felt at this discovery was such, that I could scarcely refrain from betraying myself, but exerting all my resolution, I remained silent until my maid was left alone with me:—I then gave signs of life, at sight of which she was going to call for help,—I perceived her intention,

intention, and catching her arm, I detained her, when throwing myself out of bed, I knelt before her—shocked and affrighted, she used every effort to raise me from the ground: but I assured her, I never would rise from that situation, until she had given me her solemn and sacred promise to comply with the request I was going to make—She eagerly replied that there was nothing I could propose, that she would not undertake to perform, except seeing me longer in that posture.

I now suffered her to replace me in bed, when I informed her, I had overheard what she communicated in regard to Lord Henly's return, I likewise acquainted her, that it was my fixed resolve to die, if I found no other means to avoid
this

this dreaded interview, but that I thought with her assistance, I might save myself by flight, from so impious an alternative.

—She declared her readiness to accompany me, wherever my wishes should lead me, but expressed her fears, least Lord Henly should return, before I could gain strength to put my design into execution.—I told her, I had resolved that very night should decide whether I was equal to the plan I had formed,—that I entreated she would not oppose me, or use arguments that could have no effect, that I foresaw the difficulties I was going to encounter, were of such a nature, as would have made it impossible for me to undertake them, were I not compelled by dire necessity, to embrace them as the only means of preserving me from a deed of horror. She again assured me of her readiness

readiness and fidelity; and I entrusted to her the care of making whatever provision she should deem necessary.

She now went to inform the family that she had perceived signs of life in me:—The physicians had that moment entered the house, they hastened to my apartment, where, finding me recovered beyond their most sanguine hopes,—they ordered me some drops, and left me with strict charge that I should not be disturbed, as rest was of the greatest consequence to me in my present state.

The thoughts of flying, for ever, from those I had so deeply injured, seemed to restore my mind to perfect tranquility, and I sunk into a profound sleep, which lasted for several hours—on waking I found
myself

myself greatly refreshed—my faithful Mary was alone with me; she informed me every thing was in readiness, that the family were all gone to rest, and that she had obtained permission to watch alone with me, by having said, that it was the doctor's particular desire not more than one person should remain in the room, as every thing depended on my being kept quiet.

I arose immediately,—while I was preparing for my departure, I was seized with an irresistible desire to behold, once more, that honoured parent, whom I was going to desert for ever; nor did I feel a less ardent wish to shed a tear on the cold bosom of my offended murdered mother.—I acquainted the intended part-

ner

mer of my flight, with my design of stealing to the apartments where each was, to indulge my eyes with the last sight of those dear objects, before I was eternally separated from them—She used every persuasion to prevail on me to desist from this undertaking, but in vain.

Attended by her, I entered my father's bed-room; he was in a gentle sleep,—kneeling down, with a fervour I had never before felt, I petitioned heaven to pour down eternal blessings on his revered head, and drive from his heart every remembrance of his unworthy daughter, that no thoughts of her might ever disturb his valued peace.—How long I should have remained in this situation, I know not, for I felt something like pleasure revisit my long forsaken bosom,—as

I con-

I contemplated his beloved, venerable face, had he not, by pronouncing with an accent of sorrow,—“Poor ruined Frances!—you have broke my heart—but still thou art my child”—rouled me from the momentary calmness I had enjoyed. I retired, repeating as I went, “But still thou art my child”—the words sunk deep into my heart, nor will they ever be erased from thence until that heart shall cease to beat.

We now descended to the room, where lay the remains of that parent, who had fell an untimely victim, to the sorrow and disgrace my crimes had brought upon her.—I paused at the entrance—all my fortitude forsook me, and I was going to retire, when the idea, that this was the last time, I could ever more behold
this

this once idolized parent, and the following day was to consign her to the tomb, impelled me forward,—with trembling steps I approached the coffin, and removing the lid, I beheld that face, where every grace and beauty had so lately dwelt, bereft of all its charms—a look of sternness, but too expressive of the horrors of her mind, in her last moments, chilled my soul—I implored her departed spirit to look down with pity on the deep contrition of her sorrowing and greatly penitent child, and to revoke that curse, the weight of which, I feared, would crush me.—I thought she frowned upon me as I spoke—terrified, I withdrew, and hiding my face in the bosom of my affrighted woman, I conjured her to lead me from that place of death.

She

She now, with great difficulty, conveyed me, almost lifeless, to some distance, where a chaise waited our arrival:—we drove to a neighbouring cottage, where was deposited the all that remained to me in this world;—need I say, this was my child—my Caroline?—My companion alighting, went to the humble, but peaceful roof, where slept the children of industrious poverty; strangers to the wretchedness of being great, no cares disturbed their repose:—Ah! how unlike the temple of grandeur and magnificence I had just left; where every eye was swelling with weeping, and every bosom wounded with distress; and yet how few days were past since these hapless mourners, (now a prey to shame and sorrow) had rejoiced in all the blessings that health, honour, and prosperity could bestow:

flow: and I, the most lost of human beings, was the cause, the sole cause of such accumulated distress—I felt all the weight of my crimes, with the insupportable addition of a dying parent's curse.—My soul shrunk from the horrid retrospect, a cold damp seized my heart, and I hoped approaching death would speedily release me from such unutterable anguish, when my faithful Mary returning, put into my arms, my weeping helpless infant, whom she had obtained from her nurse, by a forged tale of having been sent to bring her to its expiring mother, who desired to see it before she died.—She refused to let the woman accompany her little charge, alleging, the confused state of the family as her reason, but promised to return with it herself as soon as the wishes of its parent were complied with.

How

How shall I paint the emotions I felt on pressing to my bosom the first time, the innocent cause of all my calamities! it is not in words to tell my feelings at that moment, all the mother took possession of my soul,—I wept aloud,—my tears gave relief to my over fraught heart, and prevented its breaking.

When I had given vent to the transports you had occasioned, my maid requested to be informed of my intentions, as to the place of my future residence?—I started at the question; it had never occurred that another place of abode was necessary;—entirely engrossed with the desire of escaping, I had paid no attention to what was to follow—but I needed not much time to fix, like the first unhappy pair, expelled Paradise “the world was

was all before me where to chuse," unlike the rest of my fellow-creatures, who seek out the parts inhabited by their friends and connections, my only view was to hide myself for ever, from all that was dear to me, and to spend the remainder of my days, excluded from the sight and knowledge of all to whom I had been known, when the sunshine of prosperity marked my steps, and e'er calamity had taught me humility.

A moments consideration convinced me, England was not the place where I could hope to regain my tranquility, I therefore made choice of France, as more likely to afford me that retreat and obscurity, which were the sole objects of my desire. We accordingly pursued the road that leads to Dover.

On our arrival at Rochester, I gratified a desire, I had indulged of having my fatherless infant baptized before I left my native country ; and it being the time of prayers, the ceremony was performed in the cathedral church of that place.

We reached Dover the same evening, where we were obliged to remain that night (the packet not being to sail before the next morning)—this delay to one in my situation, appeared an age—I was almost frantick with the fear of being overtaken.—Shut up in my apartment at the inn ; I was bewailing this misfortune, when a voice from the adjoining room, which I was convinced, I was not a stranger to, caught my attention : with a palpatating heart, I drew near the partition which separated us, when I distinctly
heard

heard the same voice pronounce these words—"My dear son, exert that fortitude I know you possess, drive this abandoned woman from your thoughts, and think of nothing but revenge, on her and her associate in guilt"—I was terrified before at recollecting the voice to be that of the father of Lord Henly, what must my sensations have been, when that of Lord Henly himself, in trembling accents, replied—"Oh, my father, talk not of revenge on that deluded wretch, (for such I am sure she is), nor despise your son, while he confesses, that amidst all the misery and dishonour in which she has involved him—his soul is still torn with fears for her safety;—yes, my Lord, I see, that unworthy as she is, she insensibly twists round the strings of my agonizing heart,—a heart which cannot know com-

fort while at variance with her; for though she has for ever destroyed my peace, it shall be my study to restore hers; nor shall I think my life ill spent, if my endeavours to reconcile her to herself, succeed—On the villain, her seducer, shall all my vengeance be exhausted, but the poor ruined Frances need dread no punishment from me—May she inflict none upon herself! but knowing the pride and haughtiness of her soul, I tremble for her life.”

The entrance of a third person, put an end to this interesting conversation, and they shortly after departed; of which my maid came with great joy to inform me; and that the wind being fair, the passengers had prevailed on the master of the packet to sail directly.

This

This had the effect she wished; it awakened me from a deadly stupor, into which the reflection on the noble generosity of Lord Henly's heart, and the meanness of my own had thrown me.

We embarked; and the following day landed at Dunkirk, which, after resting one night, we quitted, and travelled by short stages (my shattered constitution not admitting of greater expedition) to a part of France where I was least likely to meet with any of my own countrymen.—My friend (for I no longer considered her in the light of a servant) here disposed of part of my jewels, which she had found means to convey out of the house the evening of our departure; as likewise what money I had with me, which she now exchanged

for the currency of this country. After a short stay in this place, we retired to the spot from whence I write this narrative. Here I had hoped to enjoy that repose to which I had been long a stranger, and for some days I felt less wretched—I thought I breathed more free, now that I no longer drew the same air with those I had rendered unhappy—But a little time convinced me, I had not a mind capable of enjoying solitude; that to be happy in retirement, I must possess a heart, with which I could commune—Alas! how different was mine—Self examination was to plunge a dagger into it.—To think was to despair—Adversity, how blunt are all the arrows of thy quiver! in comparison with those of guilt.

On my settling in this place, I assumed the name of Mordaunt (it was the Christian

tian name of Villeroy) and passed for the widow of a British officer, who had fallen in the service of his country, and that I had chosen this retirement to indulge my sorrow, for his loss; and at the same time, bring up an only child, on the small provision he had in his power to leave me.

This report gave me all the leisure I could wish.—The company of the unhappy is seldom sought, and the poor weep unheeded and unregarded.—Thus several tedious years passed on; a journal of one day, would serve as a journal of the whole; they were spent in sighs and tears, in spite of the efforts of my smiling Caroline, whose hopeless situation was a perpetual source of grief to me.—I impiously

F 4

accused

Providence of having given life to a being, without the means to render that life tolerable, and demanded of heaven, why this innocent was to suffer for the crimes of its parents.

While I was thus murmuring at the dispensations of my offended Maker, the object of my cares suddenly drooped, and I beheld the daily alteration in her person, with a consternation, that deprived me of the power to make any attempt to save her,—but my tender Mary having heard that there was an English physician, who had come to reside near us, for the benefit of his health, applied to him for his assistance; which he gave with that readiness, his benevolent heart ever experiences, when opportunity offers to alleviate the

the distressed of his fellow creatures. The little hopes he could give me of preserving the little treasure of my heart, brought on a lingering illness, which I was convinced would prove fatal to me,

In the certainty of this, I wrote the inclosed letter to the still beloved Villeroi, which I gave to my weeping friend, with injunctions to forward it as soon as I should be dead,—As I was a stranger to what part of the world he was in, I directed to him at his father's, in England, the following is a copy :

F 6 To

TO

MORDAUNT VILLEROY, ESQ.

A Few short hours will end the worldly misery of the once happy Lady Frances Henly: this alone could induce her to address the man, for whom, she has forfeited every blessing in this life; nor presumes to hope for happiness in the next—But think not I mean to upbraid—No, Villeroiy, thou partner of my guilt—I do not wish to add mine to the reproaches of your own heart—No dearest of men (for that you are still dear to me, every vein of this bleeding bosom will testify) even at this moment, when every other

other tie is forgotten, and my distracted soul looks forward to that trimendous hour with horror, when I am to be called to account for the miseries I have occasioned,—sinking under the weight of a parent's curse, that parent pleading against me at the great tribunal—Yes, Villeroi, even at this moment, the most ardent wish of my heart is breathed for your eternal welfare; but lest the hand of death should prevent my purpose, I must hasten to inform you, that the fruit of our unhappy love, was a daughter, who now lies a victim to the same power to which I yield; my only hope is to survive, until I see her gentle spirit depart before, that I may be assured she has escaped the evils my soul presages a lengthened date would heap upon her—But least this should not be the case, and that she should

be reserved to fulfil some future decree of Providence, I think it my duty to inform you, that I have given her the name of Caroline Mordaunt:—perhaps your name will be the only knowledge she will have of a father—Yet why should I tax you with such baseness as to suppose you will neglect the daughter of your once loved Frances?—No, it is impossible—Let me then conjure you (should chance ever direct her to you) to receive her—shield her—protect her helpless innocence, and for her mother's sake, be to her a father.—Remember, Villeroy, it is the dying request of one, who, but for you had never known calamity.

I have bequeathed her, the sting of my misfortunes, it was all I had to give—
should

should they teach her to shun the dangerous precipice from which her parent fell, how great will be the gift!—Be it your task, Villeroy, should she ever claim your protection, to warn her against the too prevailing arts of your sex—To you, I resign her, with an ardent prayer, that she may prove as great a blessing to you as I have proved a curse to my poor, disgraced, valuable parents—and may she never resemble her lost mother in life as she does in her features.

I have now fulfilled the task of duty, and maternal fondness:—I have only a few words to add, which are, that the last moments of my existence shall be breathed out in prayers for your good or ill success in future, as you shall merit by your conduct

conduct to this helpless child of sorrow—
Farewell, Villeroy! Farewell for ever!

FRANCES HENLY.

I had continued for some time in constant expectation of my release from this world, wishing, yet dreading, to hear of that of my Caroline, whom I was debarred seeing, through tenderness for us both.— I had for several days perceived an unusual degree of anxiety in the countenance of my companion, but dared not enquire from whence it arose. I waited, in silence, a disclosure, which I doubted not would give me the last pang, that Heaven could inflict on this side the grave.

In .

In this state of mind, I was surprized by her sudden appearance; she entered the room, almost frantic, crying, she will live! Oh, my beloved lady, our Caroline will live.—Before I could enquire the meaning of her words, the humane physician entered, and congratulated me on the safety of my child; he informed me that the crisis of her disorder was over, that it had been severe, but ended favourably, and he was happy he could now pronounce her out of danger:—A momentary joy took possession of my heart, but it was of short duration; the recollection that I must leave her behind me, in a world, from which the least she had to expect was poverty and neglect, soon chased away every grateful idea from my mind; and I lamented the cruelty of
my

my fate, that would not suffer me to behold this beloved object of my cares lodged beyond the reach of misfortune.

This worthy gentleman, after contemplating me for some time, with a countenance of imprefible piety and benevolence, drew a chair, and seating himself near me, bethought me to be composed and submit myself to that Providence, at whose dispensations it was presumption to repine.—He said, he hoped my education, not my heart, was in fault, as the errors of the former might be corrected, but for the defects of the latter he feared there was no cure.—Perceiving me attentive, he proceeded in his conversation to reveal to my uninformed sense, comforting and sacred truths, to which I had until that
hour

hour been a stranger: he taught me the duties of a christian and a parent—he assured me, mine was the sickness of the mind not that of the body, and that my recovery rested chiefly on myself—He exhorted me to atone for my past errors by an endeavour to prolong my days, and use them in the performance of those duties I had hitherto neglected—Religion and maternal instruction—He painted out the obligation I was under to preserve my life for the benefit of a being to whom I had given existence, and whom I had no right to deprive of so great a blessing, as it was in my power to be to her, by teaching her to avoid principles which had by depriving me of fortitude to support the ills of life, rendered that life miserable; and by want of a just confidence in the unerring

unerring justice of my Maker, nearly proved fatal to my everlasting peace— This generous man concluded by making me a solemn promise, that if my endeavours to live should prove ineffectual, my Caroline should never want a parent, while heaven prolonged his days.

Astonished at such unexpected goodness, I would have thrown myself at his feet, but he prevented me, and entreated I would not so over-rate little acts which it was incumbent on every christian to perform. I gazed on his venerable figure with a rapture of delight, and I thought I beheld something more than mortal; clasping his hands in mine, I bathed them with my tears, I conjured him to inform me, what pitying power had sent him to
be

be my saviour and comforter, or where he learned that blessed disposition to sooth the sorrows of the wretched: but (I continued) tell me, Oh! tell me, do not I dream? shall not I awake to grief and disappointment? He again assure me, I might depend on his promise—He urged me not to look upon myself as alone marked out by Heaven to suffer, what was the lot of many: he too was the child of affliction, and in the hard, but wholesome school of adversity, he had been taught the lesson of humanity—Yes! young lady (he continued with a faltering voice) I know what it is to be a parent, a fond, a doting parent,—I too, though now reduced to depend on another for the means of life, was once amongst the happiest of Fortune's children,—I then,

then, possessed an angel—but she is gone—the partner of my breast is gone—The stern decrees of Providence were too much for her feeble constitution—He burst into tears, and suddenly withdrew to conceal his emotion.

From this time my mind acquired a degree of tranquillity I had long dispaired of regaining:—instead of repining at the miseries I endured, I offered up unceasing thanks to the great Disposer of good and evil, for his mercies to an offending wretch.

When I reflected on the undeserved suffering of the man, whose life of piety, charity and benevolence, seemed to have a just claim on the protection of Heaven,—I was almost
led

led to accuse the justice of Omnipotence, ignorant that I was, that he alone can judge what is best for his creatures, and that his ways are past finding out.

Now that I had become a rational being, I divided my hours between my duties to the Supreme, and the education of my child, and for the first time, made an acceptable use of those talents and accomplishments, which hitherto had only been instrumental to my undoing:—I saw with inexpressible delight, that avidity with which my Caroline imbibed, not only the ornamental instruction I could give her, but the more material mental tuition she received from her able teacher, Dr. Smith, whose leisure was dedicated to her improvement.—In this manner did

we

we proceed until Caroline attained her fifteenth year, without any change in our situation, except the loss of my ever lamented Mary, who was carried off by a fever.—To the last hour of my life, I shall retain the most feeling sense of her generous friendship, and I cherish a fond hope that we shall shortly meet in a place, where no sorrow is known.

My now only friend had for some time past intimated his wish to have our little charge, sent for a few years, to some part of France, where she might have the benefit of masters, to give a finish to her education, which it was not possible to attain, situated as we were; but I had avoided entering into a conversation with him on this subject, as I foresaw it would
end,

end, in depriving me of my hearts only treasure—He perceived my motive, and at those times forbore to press his scheme, but at length, his regard for his adopted daughter got the better of his humanity for me: and he took advantage of its being her birth-day, to introduce his request, by representing that she was now at an age that would not admit any further delay—He urged this with so much success; that he obtained my compliance, and accordingly she was, a fortnight afterwards entrusted to the care of the Lady Abbess, of the monastery of ——— who had long been known and greatly esteemed by this worthiest of men.—What I suffered at this separation, none but those who have parted with an only, and idolized child can judge:—A strong foreboding

foreboding that this was the last time I should ever behold her, rendered the hour of parting truly terrible—My tender filial Caroline, shocked by my distress, implored my permission to remain with me, with such earnestness, as required all my fortitude to resist; but after some time past in a state of irresolution, I yielded my own happiness to her improvement.—We parted never more to meet.

Three years are now past, since my eyes have beheld the only object that was capable of affording them pleasure,—those years have been spent in sickness, solitude, and sorrow—Formerly I made a part of the crowd; I am now a solitary individual, left alone with God and my own mind—I have endeavoured by the
most

most humble penitence for my crimes, and by an unrepining resignation under the heaviest sufferings, to obtain forgiveness of that God, and I will trust in his mercies, for he never fails to heal the bruises of the wounded spirit.

I have now, my child, finished the narrative of my disastrous life; it has been a painful task to me, but it is capable of proving an inexhaustible source of good to you—Oh! engrave it on the tablet of thine heart—let it teach you to fly from the first temptation to vice; learn to distrust your best resolves:—by too great confidence in herself, your parent fell.

Among my papers you will find a letter to your father, should Providence
VOL. I. G ever

ever direct you to him,—The one I formerly wrote (a copy of which you have perused) was, by mistake, forwarded to England, during my illness—whether it was ever received I know not—it went by a friend of Dr. Smith's, who was directed to put it, with others, into the first post-house, after he arrived in his own country, and as I had not named the place of my abode in it, there was no clue, by which he could discover in what part of the world you were left, should he be inclined to seek you.—The total uncertainty I am in, with regard to his fate (having remained in profound ignorance of what has befallen, not only him, but every other individual, in whom I was interested); the recluse manner in which I had lived, affording no possibility

lity of any information, except what Dr. Smith might have received from his correspondents, and of him I never dared make any inquiry, dreading lest I might hear something which would plunge me still deeper in guilt and misery; for early in my acquaintance with this gentleman, he had, in the hope of amusing me, sent me some old English newspapers for my perusal; in the first of which I cast my eyes on, I found mention made of a duel, which had been fought between Lord Henly and Sir Harry L——, in which the latter had been killed on the spot; the intelligence went no farther, but the paragraph concluded with a remark, that left no room to doubt, that this unworthy character had fallen a victim to his own baseness and folly, in ha-

ving given the world to understand, that his attentions to me had been rewarded with generosity, equal to his most sanguine wishes.

I had still another motive for my silence, having never entrusted this valuable friend with the real cause of my sorrow and despondence, and earnest to preserve my secret for ever from his knowledge, I stifled every desire that would have impelled me to seek for intelligence, which might prove destructive to all my future hopes, by depriving my child of a friend and protector. I must repeat, my Caroline, the total uncertainty I am in, with regard to his fate, obliges me to entreat you not to indulge the hope of ever receiving a father's protection, as such
hope

hope might lead you to neglect the means Heaven may point out for your establishment in life.

I have the inexpressible comfort in my last moments, of knowing I have bequeathed you to a friend, who, while he remains on earth, and you continue to merit his attention, will never forsake you.—But my beloved child, my adored Caroline, I feel I must—I must bid you adieu, a last adieu—the chill of death is on me, even Villeroy has no longer a place in this rended heart ;—I go to receive the punishment of my crimes, or the reward of my penitence,—sometimes my soul is brightened by hope, at others clouded by despair—A hand appears to come forth, and write upon the wall,

G 3

“ Thy

"Thy mother's curse is registered above"
—My affrighted soul shrinks back! and
I wish for added years of contrition and
mercy; but it will not be—Take then
the blessing of thy dying parent, it is all
she can—Be virtuous—and be happy,

FRANCES,

To no other name am I entitled.

MISS BEVILL

TO

MISS MORDAUNT.

NO words can express, my Caroline, the gratitude I feel, for the confidence you have reposed in me; it has, if it was possible, drawn tighter the cord that has so long bound me to you:—I trust I shall prove myself, at least not unworthy of this great mark of your friendship: you may rest assured, her secret shall ever remain such.—I herewith re-

G 4.

turn.

turn the papers entrusted to me : the tale of woe, which they contain, has beguiled me of many a tear—my heart still bleeds at the recollection of (I had almost said) undeserved sufferings of the hapless Lady Frances; for surely there does not exist that being, who could bear unmoved, the story of her sorrows, nor refrain to acknowledge that her crimes were occasioned, not by a vicious, but a too tender heart; and the atonement she had made would have obtained the pardon she so ardently sought, even had her offence been premeditated; for are not we instructed to believe, that the Great Author of our being is ever ready to extend his mercy to the penitent sinner? yes we are, and the once erring Lady Henly, is now a saint in Heaven.—Grieve no longer then, my sweet friend,

friend, that she is taken from a world she had so little cause to regret leaving, and in which she possessed a soul too great, ever to be happy after her fall ; a world, whose forgiveness, not all her sighs and tears, her life of solitude, nor contrition of heart, could ever have obtained—No, my Caroline, we partake not of the blessed temper of him who made us ; his arms are open to receive the penitent, and to pour balsam into the wounds he has inflicted.—Our bosoms are shut, our mouths alone are open, and these are filled with bitterness and reproach—Neither must you grieve that your mother's life was stained by one act of guilt, but remember that the very crime which shortened her days, has in the hand of heaven, proved the instrument in making her worthy of

G 5

being

being an inhabitant of that blessed region, where she will be eternally happy—For, may we not believe? she would have returned to the scene of folly she had quitted, and passed her days, though not in the commission of great crimes, yet without one act of religion, virtue, or even humanity?—She had then gone to meet her offended judge, unrepining, and unprepared—lay those considerations to your heart, and comfort will follow.

Let me entreat my weeping friend to dry up her tears, and regain her wonted cheerfulness, and that she will hasten to inform her Harriet that she has done so; and likewise, in what situation her humane benefactor intends placing her—
Need I conjure my Caroline, by our past friendship,

friendship, to conceal nothing from one who loves her with more than a sister's fondness? My impatience to hear from you is such, that I cannot conclude without re-urging you to lose no time in gratifying my wish, which I think you will oblige me in, when I tell you, with great truth, that I shall be a stranger to peace, while I think you unhappy, nor can health, pleasure, or affluence, with all their allurements, charm or interest my heart, while I am in doubt of my Caroline's being in a capacity to enjoy either of those most essential ingredients to human felicity.

I will not now intrude further on your time, as I conclude it is employed with your parental friend, but hasten to assure

G 6 you,

you, that I am in every situation of life,
with the most ardent prayers, for your
uninterrupted happiness,

Your truly grateful and affectionate,

HARRIET BEVIL.

MISS MORDAUNT

TO

MISS BEVIL.

MY Harriet must not deem me ungrateful to the voice of friendship, nor unconvinced by the comforting arguments, it has dictated, when she reads that I am still a stranger to happiness, and almost to repose—Were it possible I should soon forget the loss of a parent whom I loved with the fondest affection, the scenes I have lately been engaged in, would have recalled it to my mind—But it was not possible;

possible; the love I bore her, when unacquainted with her story was of too tender a nature, to admit of early consolation; what then must be my feelings now, when I consider myself as the cause of her calamities?—Yes, but for me, she would have remained in her native country, surrounded by friends who would have loved and honoured her; she would have atoned for her crime by acts of virtue, benevolence and attention to her injured husband's happiness, and generosity to the fallen of her own sex, who had not like her escaped the rigour of a too often misjudging world: she would have possessed rank and affluence; instead of which,—behold her driven, by my unhappy birth, a stranger in a foreign land, destitute of health, fame, and fortune—her peace

peace of mind destroyed—a disgrace to her noble family, and shrinking under the tremendous load of a parent's curse.—— Oh! my friend, when I reflect upon the sorrow and death I have occasioned, my heart dies within me, and I look upon myself as one sent by heaven in its wrath to be a scourge to all who are so unfortunate as to be in any degree connected with me: but I must quit this theme, it is unkind to my Harriet, and ungrateful to that being, who has raised me up a friend in the hour of need, and to that friend, whose anxiety to restore me to tranquillity, deprives him of that calmness and quiet he would otherwise enjoy.

The day after I forwarded my last to you, I received a letter from my benefactor,

factor, desiring my attendance, to assist in settling some little matters relating to my deceased parent.—I obeyed the summons, and found this best of men much altered, and his constitution much broke, since I had parted with him.—He received me with truly parental tenderness, and endeavoured, by his cheerfulness, to remove the melancholy with which he saw me overwhelmed—I remained several days without being able to collect resolution sufficient to mention the business for which I had been sent for; he too was silent, until a few mornings since, after we had breakfasted and I had proposed reading to him; he said, “My child seems more tranquil to day than I have yet seen her, has she fortitude to accompany me to —— he paused, nor had he

he occasion to proceed, I felt my cheek glow with shame, at having compelled him to remind me that my duty was yet unpaid at the grave, that contained the remains of my departed mother—I held out my hand—he took it with a look of compassion, and putting it under his arm, he led me to the humble habitation where lately had dwelt the unfortunate Lady Henly.—You my Harriet will conceive what my emotion must have been at entering,—it was with difficulty I was kept from fainting; I was in terror lest in the agitated state of mind I was in, I should betray the secret so carefully preserved by my dear unhappy parent, and deprive her memory of that respect on which she had set so great a value.—The thought roused me, and I repeated a vow I had before

fore made, never, let the necessity be what it might, to disclose to my benefactor, the real cause of that sorrow he had been a compassionating witness of.

He soon returned to the apartment where he had left me, and finding me recovered, he put into my hand, a small casket, sealed up, and directions upon it, that it should not be opened; but by me. Anxious to be informed of the cause of this secrecy, I hastily broke the seal and found it contained the few jewels which had not been disposed of for our support; on a nearer search, I found something carefully wrapped up, and placed by itself—on opening the paper, in which it was inclosed, these words,

words struck my eyes—"This, my Caroline, is the picture of your father; should you ever meet with him, this will make him known to you, and you to him, —may the knowledge prove a blessing to you both!" I sunk involuntarily on my knees, and petitioned heaven to direct me to the dear original, if he still lived, and to make me a source of consolation and comfort to him—Might I indulge a hope that this application would be granted, I think I could forego cheerfully every other worldly blessing—I was too much engrossed with my new acquisition, to reflect how the time passed, when I was informed that Doctor Smith had finished his business, and was uneasy at my remaining so long alone—I hastily kissed and placed the lifeless image in my bosom, breathing an

an ardent wish that it had been sensible of the affection and duty I bore it.—On meeting my revered friend, he informed me that he had disposed of what effects were in the house, and had paid the few demands which had been made, that there yet remained a small sum to be disposed of as I should think proper.—I requested he would leave it with the woman, who had been a faithful attendant to her deceased mistress, as a trifling reward for her service.—I now intreated to be conducted to the last asylum of my regretted mother: we walked in silence, until we came to a spot of earth that was raised above the surface and sodded over—Here my benefactor stopped, and looking wistfully in my face, then upon the sod—burst into tears —Oh! my Harriet, how shall I describe
this

this solemn, this awful scene?—it was the dusk of the evening—no habitation in view, or noise to be heard, save the distant murmurs of a fall of water; I attempted to speak, but could not find utterance, I waved my hand to my friend to leave me, and throwing myself upon the humble turf, that covered all that remained of the once haughty Lady Henly:—I gave a loose to the sorrow of my heart, until the return of my more than father, who through tenderness, compelled me to quit a scene, which I left with the utmost regret—and this my friend, was the grave that contained the beautiful, the accomplished Lady Henly, whose noble birth and splendid fortune were her smallest claims upon the world for admiration and respect—She
who

who had been looked up to as an object for imitation—now lies without even a stone, to tell she once had lived!—Come, ye proud, ye dissipated, look on this humble spot, mark, how the foot of the heedless passenger passes over the once lovely bosom of her, who a few years since had nothing but honours and happiness in view; and, as you contemplate the humiliating scene, correct your hearts—reflect in time—reflect that titles and fortune are of no account with Him “who hurls the lightnings and directs the storm.”—I cannot proceed—Adieu my Harriet,

CAROLINE MORDAUNT.

MISS CAROLINE MORDAUNT

TO

MISS HARRIET BEVIL.

Paris

MY friend will be surprized to receive a letter from me, dated at Paris, where I have been near a week, but would not inform her of it, until I could speak with some certainty of my new situation :

—The day following my last to you, my benefactor received a letter; I perceived his benign countenance brighten as he perused

perused it, which, as soon as he had done, he turned to me, saying, "This paper has made me happy, for it offers an asylum to my Caroline, which, though inferior to her merit, will be superior to her expectations"—He then proceeded to inform me, that he had some days since wrote to Lady Belvidere, a relation of his, giving an account of the death of Mrs. Mordaunt, and painting the hapless situation, and the great worth of her friendless daughter; and that was the answer he had received, putting the letter into my hands—It contained the kindest expressions of compassion for the sufferings of my mother, and humanity to me, and concluded by desiring I might be sent to Paris without delay, where I should be treated with that tenderness my situation merited—

merited.—I felt no joy at this proposal, but on the contrary befaught my generous friend to allow me to remain in that solitude with him.—He assured me, that in parting with me, he parted with the comfort of his life, but that he found his days hastening to their close, and as he owed his subsistence to the bounty of the relation whose protection he now offered me, I should at his death be destitute of every support.—I submitted, not without reluctance, to accompany him in two days —on the evening before our departure, I went to pay the last duties to the remains of my departed mother, on my way there I met the woman I have mentioned to have lived with her as her servant—I pre-vailed with her to return with me, to the deserted dwelling of her late mistress,

where I left no part unvisited, every room I quitted seemed to rend my heart—I felt as if taking my last leave of a long known and valued friend—I now dismissed my companion, and alone searched out the spot of earth, where had been deposited, the grief-worn form of the ill-fated Lady Henly—Here I indulged, in all the luxury of woe, until the quick approach of night compelled me to quit a place which will be for ever sacred to my memory. and often in my imagination will I revisit it, and pour out the tears of filial affection.

According to our intention, we began our journey early in the morning, and reached Paris in four days.—We waited on Lady Belvidere the same evening—Her Ladyship, received us very graciously, behaving

behaving with great friendship to Doctor Smith and tenderness to me—Finding myself very much fatigued, I requested permission to retire very early, and was attended by her ladyship's own woman, and lodged in a most superb apartment, where I passed the night in vain conjecture, as to the situation I was to occupy. under my new patroness—On rising next morning, I found my benefactor coming down; he eagerly informed me, that Lady Belvidere was charmed with my person and manner, and assured him, if my mind was a corresponding one, she would ever be grateful to him, for having given her an opportunity of contributing to the happiness of one so deserving—He likewise acquainted me, that it was her ladyship's pleasure I should pass as an

H 2

orphan

orphan relation of her own.—We were now summoned to breakfast, at which her ladyship requested I should in future preside.—The unaffected kindness with which she treated me, soon dispelled the anxiety and restraint I had hitherto felt, and I insensibly entered into conversation.—Books were the subject; you know it is the only one upon which your Caroline presumes to give an opinion.—Lady Belvidere appeared surpris'd at the extent of my knowledge, and saying, “She doubted not I read well, desired I would make choice of a book from the library, and indulge her with a specimen—I obeyed, and returning with a volume of the divine Milton, proceeded to comply with her ladyship’s directions.—While she listened with the utmost attention—At length addressing

dress'ing herself to Doctor Smith, in a low voice, said, "I perceive her taste is excellent, and she reads charmingly; why! my dear Sir, you have brought me a rich jewel"—Then turning to me, with a smile of complacency, "Young lady," she pursued, "I already feel I shall have great obligations to you, you will make my hours pass delightfully."—I with warmth replied, Madam, I too already feel, that to contribute to your satisfaction, will be to add to my own happiness.—She called me a little flatterer, and retiring, left me with my benefactor, who informed me, he meant to leave Paris on the following day, having now every wish of his heart fulfilled, in seeing me settled in a situation which held out every promise of happiness; and the busy

scenes of life no longer affording him pleasure, he proposed to hasten back to his retirement, where he could unmolested pass the short remainder of his days in prayer for my future welfare, and in the service of his God.—I took this opportunity to mention a remark I had made of his speaking to Lady Belvidere of my father, as a man of family, and one whom he had intimately known.—He replied that he thought it more for my interest, as he was aware of her ladyship's partiality for high birth; and he was convinced the deceit might be productive of much good, and could not possibly be of evil, while the secret remained with us alone; that he was sensible it would be attended with the worst consequences (at least to him) should it be known to her, that he had attempted

tempted to deceive her, as that was an offence she never pardoned.

This good man then made me acquainted with the melancholy circumstances, which led to his becoming an object of her ladyship's bounty:—He had in his youth married a relation of hers, against the consent of her friends, who all, except Lady Belvidere, had disowned her from that moment; notwithstanding which, their days passed on in bliss.—He rose to great eminence in physic, the profession he followed; this with an estate of two thousand pounds a year, which he inherited from an uncle, enabled them to live splendidly, until a law-suit was commenced and gained by another branch of the family, which deprived him of his

estate, at a time when they were borne down with affliction, at the loss of an only and darling child—This accumulation of misfortunes, was more than the partner of his heart could support—she sunk beneath the stroke—he survived her, but was for a long time alike indifferent to the cares or comforts of life, as he was deprived of reason—On the return of recollection, he made an attempt to return to his former profession, but had the mortification to find every effort he made construed as a fresh proof of madness; until at length convinced of the impossibility of success—he resigned himself to poverty and despair.—At this time Lady Belvidere invited him to follow her, (for she resided abroad) where he remained with her several years, but being disgusted with the world,

world, and his health much impaired, he obtained her permission to seek a retirement, in which she enabled him to enjoy all the comforts he was capable of tasting by allowing him a liberal annual income which he spends in the relief of his distressed fellow-creatures.—After seeking the solitude he wished, in several parts of France, chance directed him to the residence, and brought him to preserve the life of your Caroline.—I will not comment on the affecting story of the sorrows of this best of men, lest I presume to question the decrees of that All-wise Being who has doomed the most faithful of his servants to a life of distressful penury and disappointment. Had my Harriet heard him relate his interesting narrative,—had she seen the “big round drops chasing

H 5 each

each other down his venerable face," she would have sympathized with her friend, in lamenting the hard fate of the revered protector of her earliest infancy—Alas ! my Harriet, he is no longer my protector, he has resigned me to the care of another, and left me, perhaps never more to meet, yet I will not anticipate misfortune, but as this subject has untuned me for any other, I will defer until another post, giving any further particulars of my situation,

I remain, as ever,

my Harriet's affectionate,
CAROLINE MORDAUNT.

MISS

MISS MOREDAUNT

to

MISS BEVIL.

ANOTHER week has passed

without my addressing one line to my beloved Harriet—how will she be surprised to find her Caroline pleading a multiplicity of engagements as her excuse!—yet this is the truth—Indeed my friend this Lady Belvidere is very amiable, she is ever contriving some amusement to dissipate the melancholy, which

H 6 in

in spite of my best endeavours, will at times overwhelm me; but I am much better and every day seems to lessen the weight that oppressed my heart—I frequently chide myself, when I recollect that I have passed hours without once recalling images to my mind, that ought never to be absent from it—Surely the happiness of my own situation will never obliterate the remembrance of the sorrows of her who gave me birth: no, no! it cannot be; nor can the splendour with which I am surrounded, or the respect with which I am attended, make me forget that I am the child of misery, who, but for the humanity of one individual, had been a friendless out-cast; perhaps at this moment a houseless wanderer, doomed to implore the scanty means of a
wretched

wretched exultance from the unwilling passenger; or what is still more terrible to thought, to have eat the bread of infamy—Oh! my Harriet, my friend, by that dear appellation I conjure you frequently to remind me, that I am a nameless orphan, the offspring of guilt, indebted to charity for every blessing I possess: In earnestness of soul I make this request, for I tremble least the pleasures with which I am encircled, should allure my weak heart from the humble lowliness I have taught it to feel—with this request I will conclude this letter, with the hopes it will more deeply be impressed on your mind—Adieu,

My loved Harriet,

CAROLINE MORDAUNT.

MISS

MISS BEVILL.

TO

MISS MORDAUNT.

*England.***SURELY** Caroline Mordaunt

has forgot that Harriet Bevil is not yet twenty—You certainly intended your last letter for some virgin of fifty-five—such a one would I have no doubt, have been delighted with the good-natured office your generosity would have bestowed upon

on me—I think I see the whole sisterhood at variance, contesting for the employment—what a pleasant group!—You know my aunt Agatha has inspired me with a particular veneration for the race of ancient maidens—I have thoughts of using my interest with you, to suffer me to transfer this liberal employment to her: the good soul would resign the teizing of me, for the pleasure of serving one, on whom she would exert her powers with so much greater effect: besides the opportunity of displaying her inimitable abilities in this way on me ceases, unless what she can convey by letter—So say the word and Agathia is yours—and this you may rely on, she will loose no occasion of proving herself faithful to the trust reposed in her, of keeping you humble

ble and mortified—I know you wonder what I mean by saying. the virgins employment ceases except what she can convey by letter; I am ashamed to tell you, yet you must know it;—read then, but do not laugh I charge you—My mother, the forrowing reliſt of the idolized Mr. Bevil is married;—yes Caroline, that mournful widow who had determined to wear no other drefs than her weeds the remainder of her days, is married; and has complimented the object of her dotage with the whole fortune of her former husband, and I am commanded home, to pay my duty to my new papa, who it seems is a baronet—This marriage has brought about a wonder! it has occasioned my aunt and me to agree in pretty near the same opinion, viz. that

that the late Mrs. Bevil is —, but hush Harriet, recollect who you are writing to; —well then, I will only tell you Agatha's opinion: first then, she says, the said Mrs. Bevil was a hypocrite, in pretending to love her dead husband; secondly, she was a weak woman in marrying again; thirdly, she is a wicked one, for giving him her childrens fortune—So much for my poor dear turtle-hearted mama.—But seriously, Caroline, the old lady's matrimonial fit is exceedingly mal-a-propos; I assure you I was a good deal deranged at the first intelligence, and had not the sun-shine of prosperity just then broke through the cloud, that hung over the fate of my friend, I know not what effect this ridiculous affair might have had upon me—I was half determined to follow

low my bridal mamas example, and take the first that offered, sooner than return to the house of my late father, to be a witness of her folly.—While I was weighing this business in my mind, the postman arrived with your letter, which I had no sooner read, than all my chagrin vanished, my countenance proclaimed it had.—Whence is this cried my aunt, looking steadfastly in my face?—My friend is happy, answered I, and I have no cares.—Is your foolish mother unmarried? returned Agatha, or will your friends happiness give you another fortune? It will give me what fortune cannot purchase, content, my good aunt.—I should suppose my mother's marriage would give you what you was destitute of before.—What is that, Harriet?—Hope!—Hope of

of what child?—Nay, now you go further than I intended, I only meant a husband, which as you are only five years older than mama, and as she has got one, I think it is not impossible but you may yet get; but as to a child; well that may not be impossible either.—The poor virgin could not bear this; in one of her shrillest tones, she exclaimed; very well, Harriet, extremely well, I see you are resolved to lose my fortune too—Mercy forbid, answered I, that I should wish to deprive your little ones of what will be their right by birth.—Indecent girl! was her mild reply, and she paced backward and forward the room with more agility than I had supposed her mistress of, while I, with all the composure in the world, went to my harpsichord, and rasling my fingers.

fingers over the keys, sung pretty loud,

“The boys with all their fathers sense,
the girls with all their mother’s beauty”—
looking rather saucily at the enraged lady
as I sung these last words—You know
Agatha is not handsome.

At this moment the Count de L—
was announced; I have sometime thought
he would have no objection to this lady’s
fortune, and took this opportunity of
leaving him with her, in the hope he
would declare himself. I accordingly
whisked out of the room, at one door
while he entered at the other.—The
Count speaks not one word of English,
and my aunt, notwithstanding she has
resided three years in France, but few of
French, and those intolerably bad:—
what

what a charming *tete-a-tete*!—Should he be hardy enough to hazard a tender look or expression, I know not what will be the consequence, for I verily believe this maiden is unlike all other maidens, for she has an invincible antipathy to all male creatures; whether it arises from resentment at their former neglect, or was implanted in her by nature, I cannot decide, but so it is.

I know, Caroline, I shall have a lecture from you, for vexing this good soul, (for such she is, in spite of all her faults, and they are rather numerous) I have been twice sent for, to act in my old capacity of interpreter, but have not yet obeyed the summons, and my woman informs me, it is now too late, as the Count has departed

departed shrugging up his shoulders, and seemingly astonished.—He has certainly attempted to whisper something soft.—The lady it seems is gone her usual mornings ride, without acquainting me, a very unusual thing; but she shall fare the worse for it on her return, until then peace be with her.

By my trifling as I have done, you will suppose my heart to be at ease, and yet Caroline were it to be consulted it would tell a different story.—The thoughts of living in another kingdom from that which contains my beloved friend, fills my bosom with anxiety, and the joy I should otherwise have felt at receiving a mother's embrace, is greatly damped by the recollection that she has compelled
me

me to receive a ~~father~~, no! not a father; What shall I call him? My sister Sophia speaks not highly of him, and if this dear girl, who is all gentleness, disapproves of him, what shall I do who have not much milk in my composition; —she says high birth is his ruling passion, and all his discourse is of his ancestors —Would to heaven, he and his ancestors were inhabitants of the same house at this moment.

This vile subject, I mean the Baronet, has made me out of humour, and my aunt has come quite a-propos to divertit: adieu my dear Caroline, I will run down and congratulate her on her conquest, and beg to know if the happy day is fixed, when

I may

I may call the count, uncle—once more
adieu,

I let me have my scolding as soon as
possible,

Your's as ever,

HARRIET BEVIL.

VILLEROY.

173

MISS BEVIL.

TO

MISS MORDAUNT

MY DEAR CAROLINE,

I Request you will take notice,
I here revoke every syllable I have uttered
respecting ancient maidens, unless your
recollection being better than mine on
this occasion, can remind me of some-
thing I let slip to their advantage, if so,
I beg it may stand on record, and a spung
be applyed to all the rest, for I have been
VOL. I. **I** deceived

deceived in my opinion of those valuable members of society, and here offer up my palinode; in me, for the future, they shall ever find a champion who will never desert their cause—I will spend my time in writing a treatise to convince after-generations of the worth and extraordinary utility of those valuable women—Yes indeed, Caroline, I am in earnest, I shall do all I have promised, for in defending them I defend myself—Not a chance have I of escaping being one of the sisterhood—You undoubtedly had a presentiment of this at the time you appointed me your remembrancer; I now accept the office, and we shall see who will be tired first:—But I will relate particulars, then leave you to judge whether I have any hope beyond what

what I have mentioned—A week after our-dreadful parting (never my friend will that hour be forgotten) I landed at Dover, where I found the baronet's steward waiting my arrival, he informed me, he had orders to proceed with all expedition on his return home, as Lady Blankley was not well, and wished very much to see me.—Alarmed at this intelligence, I lost not a moment, but travelled almost night and day, indeed I began to think we were going to the world's end, when on the fifth day I was informed Sir Peter's seat was in view: I strained my neck out of the chaise window to take a look at a place which I supposed must be a second paradise, from the circumstances of my mother's having quitted her delightful retreat at W—— to reside here

—But how shall I describe either my disappointment or the massive building in which I was going to be buried alive? Oh Caroline! the monastery in which our friendship grew, was, compared with this, a pleasant modern dwelling: but to say truth, I could form but little judgment of the house, it being encircled with a dismal wall, whose height would have obscured the whole mansion, had it not been for several turrets, whose venerable heads gave notice to the way-lost traveller (for none other will ever pass a spot situated so distant from the haunts of men) of a residence beneath—I was now arrived at the gate, which (as a messenger had been despatched to announce my approach) was open: by it stood a grim-looking porter, with a key of prodigious size, who
the

the moment he had admitted me, shut and locked it after me.—The cracking of the hinges, with the incredible noise its ponderous weight made, struck me with terror—I was possessed with the idea that the baronet having heard that I was rather unmanageable, had thought it more to his advantage to have me conducted to a mad-house, than be troubled with me himself—I hesitated whether I should proceed, when I saw a figure strutting towards me, with his hat under his arm; he presented me his hand, telling me, I was welcome to the seat of his ancestors. The mad-house was still in my head.—I raised my eyes to implore protection from the skies, when they lighted on a window, through which I could discern my mother and sister; I snatched my hand from my

old beau, and made the best of my way up an immense stair-case, at the head of which I found my sweet Sophia—I pressed her to my bosom, and then flew to embrace my mother, whom I had not seen for six years—My heart was dissolved in tenderness, her errors were forgot—she returned my caresses with every token of affection.

We were interrupted by the entrance of the figure I had left in the yard, who had not altered his pace, which was slow and solemn.—At his approach my mother, with great formality presented me to him, as one who wished to be considered by him as his daughter—He stood erect, and stretching out his right arm (for his hat was still under his left) he shut his eyes
with

with intent (as I have since learned) to give me his blessing, which he expected I would have knelt to receive; but I being ignorant of his design, and seeing his out-stretched hand evidently in pursuit of me, changed my opinion of this being a place of confinement for myself, to its being one for this poor gentleman, whose disorder I thought was portrayed in his countenance, and not thinking it advisable to venture myself in his grasp, I retreated with great precipitation to the further end of this extensive apartment:— I was no sooner out of his reach, than the ridiculous appearance he made, threw me into a violent fit of laughing—he opened his eyes, and looking indignantly at me, declared with great calmness,— ‘ By the fame of his ancestors, he

had a mind to forbid me his presence"—The distress visible in my mother's countenance and my sister's, convinced me I had done wrong—I immediately made the best apology I could think of, for the mistake I had committed: he with great politeness told me, that my utter ignorance of high life, would make him overlook the prodigious indecorum I had been guilty of.

A stop was put to this pleasant conversation, by the entrance of some attendants (for nothing is done in this house without several being in waiting) with tea: the baronet desired one to attend his lady, and in all our names, to request her company: I could not conceive who this could be; I had been informed that he
had

had a daughter, but not having seen her, I could not suppose her a resident of this delightful place—I was wrong in my conjecture, for on the appearance of the person who had been sent for with so much ceremony, I was presented to her as one who would esteem myself happy, should she condescend to honour me with her friendship and sisterly affection; The baronet was my spokesman upon the occasion; you may easily believe I did not make this fine speech myself: she however received it very graciously, and waving her hand to me to sit down, reclined herself upon a sofa—I waited until I saw her completely fixed before I ventured to return to my chair, as the affair of the blessing was recent in my mind, and made me fear the committing of

another prodigious indecorum. Enquiries were now made after my aunt, and whether she had not wrote; which, though I had her letter in my pocket, I thought proper to deny:—I said my aunt was so distressed at parting with me, that she was not able to write such a letter as she would wish to send on such an occasion.—The baronet smiled saying, it was very natural for people who had not been used to the society of the great world, to feel embarrassment in addressing any of the members of it—My mother looked her thanks to me, for she knew Agatha too well to credit what I had related:—The truth was, the enraged virgin had dwelt so copiously on toothless coquets—hypocritical tears—filthy ideas—cruel mothers—old fools and dotage, to
her

her sister, besides beggarly baronets and old foxes in nearly equal numbers to the lord and master of this castle, that I was suspicious her elegant epistle would not add to his good humour by the perusal of it.—I therefore reserved it for Lady Blankley's private inspection.

Having answered all the questions put, relative to Agatha in the manner I thought most prudent and without adhering to facts, and the tea equipage being removed, Sir Peter fell back in his chair in profound silence, Sabina (for that is the name of my new sister) followed his example—I began to suppose that this was the hour of rest, and this the method of taking it in this house; but observing that my mother and sister kept their former position,

tion, though they were as silent as the other two, I likewise as I felt no inclination to sleep, sat upright in my chair, and having nothing better to employ me, made use of this opportunity to take a survey of the groupe that surrounded me, and shall present you with their portraits the first who engaged my attention was my mother; she is much altered since I parted from her, though still handsome, the marks of uneasiness and self-rebuke are strongly painted on her countenance, nor can her eye meet mine without manifest confusion,—Sophia is seventeen, very little, but elegantly formed, her complexion, fair and pale, beautiful dark hair and eyes—there is a cast of melancholy diffused over her face which renders it wonderfully interesting.—Sir Peter is a
neat

neat made dapper little man, excessively upright with a thin pale visage, and small keen black eyes, a nose that turns up at the end, which with a supercilious smile that he always wears, gives his face a look the most expressive of contempt, of any I have ever seen.—So far I believe I have succeeded pretty well—but how shall I do justice to Sabina? her statue is rather above the middle size, and formed by the hands of the graces, her complexion exquisitely fair and transparent; her cheek is tinged with the most delicate blush nature ever gave; she has a proportion of hair, which is of a bright chestnut colour, and flows in ringlets down her back; her eyes blue large and languishing, an aquiline nose, and teeth the finest in the world, her lips, that were I a man,

man, I should long to kiss, her neck, hands, and arms uncommonly beautiful; in short, Caroline, she more resembles yourself than any woman I ever beheld, and indeed for some minutes, I thought her even more lovely than you, but a second examination convinced me how much I had wronged you—The expressive language diffused over her whole person, gives one an inclination to yawn, and renders her face unintelligent: there is no trace of that soul which animates every feature of my friend, and speaks forcibly to the heart of every beholder—Do not think I flatter, for what preference can I hope from thee.

I have now given you the pictures of the whole company, except that of the painter,

painter, whose likeness I shall leave you to draw, as I am sensible of your superiority in high colouring, without which, its intrinsic value would be very small indeed: therefore be not sparing in your tints, for recollect you are not likely to approach near enough to see how far you have exceeded the original—I must now introduce you to take a view of the apartment: when these personages were seated, it is a well proportioned room of thirty foot square, as it is the smallest in the house, the family sit here when they have a mind to be snug and comfortable; it is lined with chocolate coloured wainscot, and hung round with family pictures, but as the size of the windows bear no proportion to that of the room, and as there happens to be as great a quantity of lead

as

as glafs in the conftruction of them, thofe representatives of the baronet's anceffors are involved in almoft as great darknefs as their intombed originals:—The furniture is better fuitcd, for it would require Herculean ftrength to remove a fingle chair, and as to the fofa, I queftion if fuch an attempt was ever made; but as Sir Peter thinks it intolerably vulgar for people to fit round the fire, the weight of the chairs is of no confequence, nor indeed is the aftonifhing height of the windows of much, for though ftrangers may once take the trouble of clambering upon a chair or a table to enable them to look out, there is no danger of their repeating it, as nothing but the agreeable wall I have mentioned is to be feen to reward their pains—but I had nearly forgotten one

one piece of furniture, which, as it furnishes subjects for the greater part of the conversation that passes, must not be neglected; this is no other than a looking glass, which reaches from the ceiling to the floor; opposite this, the baronet usually seats himself, from whence he observes the behaviour of every person in the room, which gives him frequent opportunities of shewing his superior elegance of manner, by pointing out our defects.—One moment it is “My dear Lady Blankley, what an attitude is that for your ladyship” — the next, “Oh fy! Oh! what my beautiful Sabina, what ungraceful habits you have lately contracted” — then “I assure you, Miss Sophia, there is a prodigious indecorum in that method of sitting” — This is hard upon poor Sophia,

phia, for the height of the chair, not allowing her feet to touch the ground, she is obliged, to avoid letting them dangle half way, to flick her heels on one of the bars.—He has not yet attacked me, though he has appeared to wish it several times; I fancy my saucy look has hitherto kept him to order—But how I have wandered from the silent meeting! you must positively accompany me back again, Caroline, or suppose an hour passed in this agreeable manner; when the baronet having finished his meditations, arose, and reaching a lute, requested Sabina to entertain the company,—she complied, and played several dying airs, which would have lulled me to sleep, had she not performed so ill as to destroy all harmony. We were now summoned to supper, which, was

was served with as much formality as if twenty strangers were to have partaken of it.—Soon as decency would admit, I retired, heartily sick of my new connection. I was conducted through a long gallery, decorated on all sides with a second edition of ancestors, for whom I was not in any humour to feel any very great veneration: they were even with me, for positively, I thought I saw in some of their expressive countenances no small degree of contempt for the banker's daughter.

At the end of this gallery, I was shewn into an apartment of sufficient size, to have lodged commodiously any regiment in the service of the grand monarch—it was hung with tapestry, representing some famous battle I conclude, for turn me
which

which way I would, nothing was to be seen but limbs without bodies and bodies without limbs—very likely subjects to inspire gentle dreams.—My attendant was a country girl, who knew as much about undressing me, as I did to assist her in bringing up poultry; but wishing to make some use of her, I inquired if there was a good neighbourhood; she dropped a low curtsy, and answered, yes—This a little revived me; and who are they? my pretty maid, said I—she replied, the parson of the parish lives but three miles off, and lawyer Twigg not much farther; besides these, there was a great lord within a day's ride—not satisfied with this intelligence, I asked if there were any beaus; but finding that word beyond her comprehension, I was obliged to substitute

tute single men in its room, and added, is the parson married? She answered, the parson is, but the sexton is not, though it was thought he had a liking to Miss Biddy Pairmain, the rich farmer's daughter.

Now, Caroline, I leave you to judge whether the fears I expressed at the beginning of this letter were without foundation, not even the sexton, you see, is disengaged.—Oh! that I was in France, with Agatha, watching the turn of her head, that I might steal an opportunity of peeping over the window blind, just to let the *petit-maitres* know that they did not pass unseen—but wishes will not avail,—You, I am sure, have wished
this

this letter concluded a thousand times,
I will therefore add no more, but that I
am as ever,

Your's entirely,

HARRIET BEVIL.

MISS

VILLEROY.

195

MISS BEVIL

TO

MISS MORDAUNT.

WELCOME, thrice welcome to the shores of Albion, may they prove propitious to my friend! may all her future hours be passed in heart-felt happiness! and is it possible? are you indeed in England? yes you are, and your Harriet once more bids her Caroline welcome to her native country, and again breaths an ardent aspiration that Fortune may

may unite with every other blessing to make that country dear to her.—Your note announcing your being at Dover, was the first intelligence I had of your visiting England—those letters informing me of that being Lady Belvedere's intentions were never received; judge then of my astonishment on opening it, and reading these words, "My Harriet will not be surprized to learn that I am at Dover, she sometime since have had intimation of my patroness's intention of once more visiting England:" It is needless to paint my sensations: my Caroline will I am certain give me credit for their being those of genuine pleasure.

I am too much discomposed to add more than that the most earnest wish of
my

my heart is to fly this moment to greet my friend in person, instead of sending this dull describer of my joy, but I fear there is no such happiness in store for her, who will, though worlds should separate us, ever be, and ever subscribe herself,

Most truly and affectionately

Yours

HARRIET BEVIL.

VOL. I.

K

MISS

MISS MORDAUNT

TO

MISS BEVIL.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

THE concluding lines of your last has filled my heart with anxiety—we are not to meet; for thus I interpret them—Ah! my Harriet, the pleasure of your company flood foremost in the catalogue of the gratifications England could afford me; have I said first? Oh no, there is one dear hope, with which
this

this journey has inspired me, superior to every other consideration:—it is to find a father, to be acknowledged and beloved by him. From my first intimation of my patronesses intention of leaving France, my mind has been occupied with this transporting idea, my imagination has been constantly employed in forming plans for discovering myself to him, and my thoughts dwell with rapture on the interesting interview.—Alas! my friend, am I not too likely to meet with disappointment here as well as in the fond expectation I had indulged of being restored to my Harriet's society—but disappointment is too cold a term to express what I must suffer in the destruction of the two grand views of my life, that of not loosing my friend and that still dearer one

K 2 of

of finding a long lost parent—Denied those blessings, what is there left worthy my pursuit, or what can repay me for the loss of them? Ah, nothing: my Harriet's presence would have softened my sorrows at not finding a parent; the tenderness of a father would have comforted me for the loss of a friend—but deprived of the one, and for ever unknown to the other, from whence can I derive any source of consolation? no where, but from that Being who has hitherto protected me—On Him then I will fix my steadfast reliance for support, I trust with fortitude, what ever of good or evil his wisdom may dispence.

We go this moment for the metropolis, which Lady Belvidere intends reaching

ing this night—I shall write from thence soon after our arrival; in the interim, I hope you will not be idle, but by the punctuality of your correspondence; atone as much as possible for the cruel loss I sustain in being deprived of your company.

In one of your letters you seem to dread my censure of what you wrote—are you not aware then that my partiality extends even to your very foibles, which by viewing them with an eye of affection, appear to lessen by imperceptable degrees until they become virtuous? Follow then the dictates of your playful disposition, untroubled by the fear of that which you never can deserve, the disapprobation of her, who values you more than life,

K 3 and

and who esteems it as one of the greatest pleasures of that life, to subscribe herself,

Your ever affectionate,

C. MORDAUNT.

MISS

VILLEROY:

203

MISS BEVILL

TO

MISS MORDAUNT.

A Hundred thousand thanks
to my dear sweet tempered Caroline for
her permission to give the reins to my
pen, which I have hitherto so much used
to a curb, that I have not only spoiled its
gait but made it unpleasant to its owner
—from this moment I resign it to nature,
who alone must be answerable for its

L K 4 imperfections;

imperfections; and shall hence forward have the delightful satisfaction of laughing at my relations, without the dread of displeasing her, whose approbation I was ever ambitious to obtain, so much so, that I protest, I believe I should have forborn to amuse myself with the oddities of my nearest connections; had she continued to disapprove of the innocent ridicule, and I can assure you, that would have been a prodigious sacrifice: for is it not the single amusement my situation affords? Yes, indeed it is, and had not this family most fortunately abounded with every species of folly, I had long before this died of ennui.

I am in haste to acquaint you with my having put in execution a scheme I have
been

been some time back projecting for the relief of myself and cloistered sisterhood:

—My having never seen a human face within these walls, save such as belong to the family, led me to conclude that either the existence of the mansion we inhabit is unknown to the world, or that some malicious report had been spread of its being haunted by ghosts or enchanted by witches, which deterred mortals from entering it—In order therefore to remove an opinion so injurious as the latter, or give information of the former, I have sent the following paragraph to be inserted in one of the daily papers:

K 5

Mr.

Mr. EDITOR,

HAVING lately passed several months in visiting different counties in England; curiosity prompted me to take a view of as many of the country seats of our nobility and gentry, as were contiguous to the parts through which I passed; in most of them, I must say to the honour of their present possessors, there subsists a splendid hospitality that would not have disgraced the days of Elizabeth—Exceptions to these there certainly are; for having when at Y—— received, in answer to my enquiries of what was worth seeing in the neighbourhood, the most unbounded praises of the place belonging to Sir P. Blankley, of which I had never before

before heard mention made—I expressed my surprize at its not having a place in a late publication of views of Gentlemens seats—My informer assured me that would have been impossible, as it was furrounded by a wall of such uncommon height as to prevent any attempt to take a drawing from the outside, and that it was equally impossible to take one from the inside, as the present owner never admitted friend or foe within his gates, being a man ‘the world unknowing, to the world unknown’ he lived but to himself, abhorring the very names of elegance and hospitality ; having degenerated from all that dignified grandeur which had so eminently distinguished his noble ancellors ; and that not content with immuring himself, he concealed from the world three beautiful

K 6 daughters,

daughters, who were possessed of fortunes, or at least intitled to them, equal to their high birth:—I made a few observations on the unhappy state of the ladies, and after venting out a few curses on the pride, avarice, and cruelty of their jailor, subscribed myself

A FRIEND TO SOCIETY.

Now what do you think of my project? do you not fancy it will succeed? I am of opinion it will unlock our prison doors, from the effect it produced on Sir Peter's countenance, which I watched as he perused this my first publication; for I took care it should have a place in the paper he takes in, but which as soon as he has read it,

it, with great solemnity puts it into the fire; judging it indecent for young ladies even to look at such foolish low stuff, as accounts of operas and masquerades.—I at this moment was far better pleased to mark the rage and mortification which distorted his visage, than I could be with any thing the paper contained; this he consumed with more than common care, but I had the pleasure of perceiving, that every word was engrafted on his memory, and I heard him mutter between his teeth, “the world unknowing! degenerated too from my ancestors! it is more than I can bear.”

The rest of our family were in the greatest distress for, and anxious to learn the cause of his ill-humour—I enjoyed every

every proof he gave of it, and it was fair I should, for notwithstanding all my efforts, it was the first time I had ever succeeded in disturbing that supercilious tranquillity of countenance he ever so provokingly wears, but thanks to my good genius. I had at last found out his vulnerable part; for his knowledge of the world is what he prides himself on the most, next to his supporting the dignity of his ancestors—(On these his leading passions I build my hope of success, for will he not be eager to remove the idea which is gone abroad? and to do this he must admit his friends (if any he has); if he has none, which I suspect to be the case, strangers must be welcomed to his castle; and surely curiosity to behold

hold the divinities it contains, will tempt many of the latter to try for admission.

Oh! my prophetic soul!—here is Sophia,—all astonishment! come to inform me that Sir Peter has ordered invitations to be sent to Lord Enfield, his neighbour at sixteen miles distance, with his two sons, and some company now at his seat, to dine with him this day three weeks—Formal wretch! what an age must I wait before I can reap the reward of my contrivance, and who can tell, if ever I shall:—Is it probable this Lord will stay so long in the country at this season? no, surely not—so here ends my hopes—I will not however conclude this until I can acquaint you with his lordship's answer, in

in the mean time I will invoke all the gods to make it favourable.

Sing Io triumphe!—they come,—yes, Caroline, the gods have been propitious—they come, a hundred of them; I almost devoured the card with my eyes, whilst I read, “His Lordship will have the honour of presenting the Countess of D——, Lady Mary, his sister, the Honourable Mr. T——, Sir Thomas O——, and Colonel F——.” Well, thank Heaven I shall once more behold the human face divine, for I have been confined too long to those about me, to see any divinity in them.

Now, Caroline, I am sure, notwithstanding your late promise, you will look
grave

grave, and condemn the step I have taken; but I must insist, that you cannot be a judge of what was right or wrong, unless you had first been in my situation, which was deplorable enough.—I do not remember having given you an exact account of the manner we murther time in this abode of stupidity:—At ten o'clock we are summoned by a bell to breakfast; nor is it proper to leave our rooms before we receive this warning, nor to remain in them one moment after—this meal ended, we may if we choose employ ourselves in embroidering or knotting, for these are the only works this slave to form, approves of for women of distinction—his employment is to preach lectures on good breeding, or animadvert on bad; for the latter I commonly furnish the materials—thus we drawl

in the mean time I will invoke all the gods to make it favourable.

Sing Io triumphe!—they come,—yes, Caroline, the gods have been propitious—they come, a hundred of them; I almost devoured the card with my eyes, whilst I read, “His Lordship will have the honour of presenting the Countess of D——, Lady Mary, his sister, the Honourable Mr. T——, Sir Thomas O——, and Colonel F——.” Well, thank Heaven I shall once more behold the human face divine, for I have been confined too long to those about me, to see any divinity in them.

Now, Caroline, I am sure, notwithstanding your late promise, you will look
grave

grave, and condemn the step I have taken ; but I must insist, that you cannot be a judge of what was right or wrong, unless you had first been in my situation, which was deplorable enough.—I do not remember having given you an exact account of the manner we murther time in this abode of Stupidity :—At ten o'clock we are summoned by a bell to breakfast ; nor is it proper to leave our rooms before we receive this warning, nor to remain in them one moment after—this meal ended, we may if we choose employ ourselves in embroidering or knotting, for these are the only works this slave to form, approves of for women of distinction—his employment is to preach lectures on good breeding, or aninadvert on bad ; for the latter I commonly furnish the materials—thus we drawl

drawl on until the clock strikes one, when an old gilt coach, with four miserable beasts, taudrily harnessed, and three footmen fixed behind, draws up to the door, and we are obliged to take the air, as it is called, with the blinds kept carefully half way up, to prevent the gaze of the vulgar : in this state the horses are walked gently on, until we arrive at a particular tree, which we never go beyond, but return in the same agreeable manner home

—This is certainly a fine opportunity of meditating, as conversation is seldom suffered to break in upon our thoughts, and any prospects which might draw our attention, are as cautiously shut out—As two hours is the time allotted for our airing, on our return it is time to retire to dress for dinner, to which we are summoned

moned exactly at five o'clock—I have already told you in what stile our evenings are passed, and it can neither be pleasant to you or myself to repeat what it tires one to think of; and on my honour, as yet, our life has had no variation in any particular.

Perhaps my next, for I shall not write again until the much wished for day is over, may have something to recommend it; if it does not, you may expect to hear that I have fled from these tedious scenes, and taken shelter with Agatha.

How widely different is your situation from your poor friend's: pleasure and elegance surround you; the wit and the scholar court your society, and you are deservedly

deservedly happy—Long, very long may you continue the favourite of Fortune, and admiration of mankind, and the faithful friend of .

Your

HARRIET BEVIL.

MISS

VILLEROY.

217

MISS BEVIL

TO

MISS MORDAUNT.

ONE of the Goddesses, Aurora, I believe, wishing to obtain more than human happiness for her husband Tithonus, petitioned the fates to make him immortal: her request was granted, but as she had unfortunately forgot to ask perpetual youth, which alone could render the present valuable, ~~what~~ she intended as the greatest blessing, proved the heaviest

heaviest curse.—The same success has attended the completion of my ridiculous prayer:—The guests came, this was all I asked; I too forgot to add what would have made their arriving a good—so I acquit their godships of all blame in the affair—but I am running on at a strange rate; I should first have given you the particulars of the visit, and afterwards the events it produced—I must therefore go a little back with my story, and tell you, as the important day drew near, every thing wore the face of business; the velvet chairs were uncovered, the side-boards groaned beneath a load of massive plate; liveries, which had not for many years seen the light, now appeared, all was commotion—nor were we females inactive, dress was not to be neglected at a time like

Like this—At length the anxiously expected morn arrives, care is painted on every visage—no lecture after breakfast, no airing before dinner—The clock strikes four, we are called to the great drawing room: the guests are not expected until five, but we are thus early to prevent any appearance of hurry or preparation:—Lady Blankley was already seated in the very spot, from whence it was judged most proper to receive her company—her ladyship was richly but gravely dressed, in fawn coloured satin, embroidered with gold—Sabina wore a body of black velvet with puffed sleeves of pink satin over a large hoop, a petticoat of the same with a broad border of black velvet superbly embroidered and fringed with silver; her train was of white satin, trimmed

trimmed like the coat; her hair, in which she had no powder, was loosely tied with a quantity of pink ribband and hung up on her back, it was parted in front, and fell in small curls on her temples, on her head, a turban cap, with a large plume of ostrich feathers, at the side of this cap, was fastened with a knot of diamonds, one end of a breadth of crape, laid in folds, which falling down behind considerably below her waist, the other end was turned up and made fast to her girdle at the opposite side; a tucker of fine lace was the only covering on her neck, her whole person was ornamented with jewels of great value—Struck with the amazing elegance of her figure, I stood fixed in admiration, which made me for a time overlook the extravagance of her dress, which would

would have done honour to the taste of Statira.—By her, sat my sweet Sophia, but she was not immediately to be seen; —at length as the dazzled eye weary of gazing at the sun, turns to the shade, and finds relief in its healing gentleness, so is the effect her simplicity has on every beholder—amongst this number I do not rank the father of Sabina, for he worships the sun until his eyes are so blinded with its lustre as to prevent his discerning any that may be placed in the shade—Sophia's dress was a white satin, over which she wore a petticoat and train of the clearest book muslin trimmed with point lace, her handkerchief and sleeves of the same as her train, the latter being loose were tied round the middle of her arm with a string of fine pearl, the former so fell as to

conceal those beauties which Sabina had so liberally displayed, her hair was dressed in curls, without powder, a small round cap of tiffany, with a plume of white feathers, and a bandeau of pearls, composed her head dress, a sash of purple satin round her waste, and in her bosom, a bunch of moss rose buds and lillies of the valley —while I contemplated the lovely girl, I felt something like contempt for the taste of the romantic Sabina, and the flippant Harriet, who was dressed in a body of dark satin, a white tiffany petticoat, with a double flounce, painted at each edge with a fessoon of roses, below which, was a slight silver fringe, a half sleeve from the shoulder of pink satin embroidered with silver, and edged with a fringe of the same, a crape handkerchief, almost covering

ing her chin; her hair in ten thousand curls, all loaded with powder, a small pink satin hat, looped up in front with a chain of brilliants, an enormous plume of white feathers, and almost as enormous a bouquet of all sorts of flowers; suspended by a diamond chain, (for what other was worthy such a charge?) hung the picture of my Caroline, in the dress of a novice, possessing more beauty thus unadorned, than all the gilded butterflies which this day surrounded her.

The different tastes we had displayed in our dresses, led me to conjecture what would be the difference in our dispositions and conduct—with regard to our visitors, after the most impartial review, the following was the judgement I formed, that,

L 2

Sabina

Sabina satisfied with her own attractions, and entertaining no doubt of their power over mankind, would sink into a state of indifference, nor make one effort to obtain what she imagined could not be withheld; at the same time her manner of receiving any offered attentions plainly shows she is not obliged, but considers them as only part of what is due to her.—How much the reverse of this, is the humbling diffident Sophia, shrinking from observation, yet grateful for the smallest tokens of regard which, the timidity of her countenance plainly evinces, she ascribes, not to any merit of her own, but to the benevolent temper of the person from whom she receives them—What! Harriet retiring and afraid to stand the test? this has an ill look, besides

sides is not your friend already acquainted with numberless failings of yours—are those you have to relate of so glaring a nature, that they will not bear the recital? For once let sincerity get the better of self-love—come boldly forward and confess that the French coquet is more just to her profession than to be ashamed to acknowledge that her leading wish is to have power to make slaves, that she may amuse herself with playing with their fetters—as this is granted I may as well go on and declare what is the opinion I had formed of what part I should act on the ensuing occasion—Behold me then, gay and easy in my manner and address, politely attentive to all whom I wish to captivate, insolent and neglectful the moment I succeed; making no distinction between the

polished gentleman, the fluttering coxcomb, the modest scholar, or the untaught clown—Admiration is all I seek, and I am gratified equally by making the fool talk or the wise man hold his tongue; him, that would pass me by, I wish to detain, and he that betrays a wish to detain me, him I haste to quit—Forward to intrude myself on the notice of all, appearing delighted with the company I am in, though perhaps ardently wishing for the hour which is to release me from the fatigue of their conversation, and give me an opportunity of ridiculing all those professions of everlasting love, respect and friendship which I have received, and perhaps returned with every token of sincerity.

Here

Here my reverie was interrupted; but first let me ask you, how you approve this sketch I have given you? will not a little finishing make it a strong likeness? at least, you must allow it greatly resembles many of our acquaintance—My interruption was occasioned by the entrance of a figure, at sight of which I started, and exclaimed, Heaven protect us all!—from what? Miss Bevil, said the figure which had alarmed me, and which I then discovered to be the baronet—to this I replied, Lord, Sir, is it you? I beg your pardon, but upon my honour I took you for one of the old gentlemen in the gallery, who had strayed from his frame, to assist on this extraordinary occasion—Now I protest, Caroline, as far as regarded my taking him for one of those painted

L 4 heroes

heroes, was strictly true, ridiculous as it may appear, for the man had arrayed himself so differently from any thing which had appeared, but upon canvas, for these twenty years (I speak within bounds) that it was impossible instantly to conceive it to be an inhabitant of this world—while just such figures adorn every wall around me, if they are uppermost in my thoughts, am I to blame? certainly not—but Sir Peter thought otherwise, for taking his hat from under his arm, and placing himself in his lecturing attitude, he was proceeding with his censures and remarks on my ill-breeding; but not feeling myself inclined to listen to a subject, which I was convinced could not furnish one new thought, I broke

broke the thread of his discourse, by eagerly saying, good gracious ! how astonishingly like, dear Sophia, do you not perceive the wonderful likeness between Sir Peter and the picture of his uncle, the great general who died to save his country ? the admiral you mean, replied the baronet, with a softened voice ; I have, myself, sometimes saw a likeness, therefore your mistake is pardonable : I wish I could say as much for some words you have uttered—you must remember you said “ strayed from its frame to assist on this extraordinary occasion ”—those words want an explanation : can you suppose it extraordinary that I should entertain the nobility of my neighbourhood ? or are you so ignorant as to imagine I want assistance

L 5 in

in doing the honours of my house?—A loud rap at the door, saved me from attempting what I was unprepared for, and the announcing of the company gave a new turn to our ideas, and here my disappointment began.

It is needless to tell you, who know my sanguine temper, that I had fancied the expected visitors to be possessed of beauty, wit, elegance, and youth—read how far my expectations were gratified: the first who entered the room, was the Countess, a fat old lady of sixty-five, Lady Sarah followed, a prim maiden of fifty, next appeared Sir Thomas Obryan, a red faced noisy fox hunter, then the Honourable Mr. S——, a conceited boy of sixteen;

sixteen; at last the Colonel came forward who, in his days, I dare say was a fine looking man, but he has been sometime descended into the vale of years; besides which he has lost an arm, and has a prodigious scar on his left cheek; neither the loss nor the gain appear to be of advantage to him, the Earl and his sons closed the procession, Lord Enfield is a courtier, his eldest son a pedant, the second a coxcomb.

You have now the company before you, I leave you to judge what amusement I could derive from such a set—In the evening when the gentlemen rejoined us in the drawing room, the Earl placed himself next me, and loaded me with compliments

compliments on my rural disposition; while I assured him, I was no ways entitled to them—He said, he understood Mr. Bevil had left his daughters so independent, that it must be their own faults if they resided in any place which was not agreeable to themselves—Silly chattering fool that I was! I made him acquainted with my father's having left every thing in my mother's power, which she, with equal liberality consigned to the care of Sir Peter—His Lordship, with a sneer, that vexed my heart, commended the judgment of Mr. Bevil, in leaving his children dependent on a woman of such extraordinary discretion, as Lady Blankley had proved herself to be.

The

The visit now ended, and left me, at least, without one wish for its ever being repeated by any of the party—But my wishes will not signify, for in consequence of my wife communications relative to our fortunes being in the power of Sir Peter, he has had a letter from the Earl, declaring his admiration of Sabina, and professing his desire of a matrimonial alliance between her and one of his sons—This proposal is accepted, but on the terms that it shall be the second son, who is to take the the name of Blankley, in return for which, he is to be complimented with half of Sir Peter's fortune for the present, and the remainder at his death, excepting the capital sum of one thousand pounds to each of Mr. Bevil's daughters—Thofe

—Those conditions are agreed to, on the part of Lord E—— and the settlements are to be drawn up without delay. I have written to Agatha an account of those proceedings, and requested her advice how to act; though I fear nothing can be done in our favour.—My mother is overwhelmed with distress and confusion, but her repentance will not now avail.—Write to me, comfort me, pity me, do any thing but advise patience, for patient I cannot, nor will not be.

The post has this moment brought me a letter from your woman, informing me of Lady Belvidere's illness, and your constant attendance on her; the poor girl seems more apprehensive on your account,

count, than on her Ladyship's—she assures me you never leave her bedside, night or day:—Let me entreat you to reflect how very ridiculous this over attendance is; for I fancy you will not dispute but that any old nurse in London, would answer the purpose better than you can in point of real assistance to the patient, and I do not believe you have any other object in view; if you had, I should advise you to relinquish it, for those elderly ladies have no gratitude, their memory will not retain benefits received, and they take care never to confer any, so all that kind of nonsense is banished from their mind; by which means they have such ample space for monkeys, titles, and cards

on which they all doat, with so much enthusiasm.

The excessive paleness of poor Sophia, is greatly owing to the anxious days and sleepless nights she passed at the pillow of her sick mother, who wished for life, but to repay her tenderness, which she has done, by selling herself, and begging that child, whose health had been cheerfully sacrificed to the restoration of hers; and this for the wretched reward of a title—a wretched one at least it has proved to her.

I must stop here, as I feel myself growing grave, which must not be indulged, for I am now in the state of Horatio,
in

in Hamlet, who no revenue have but my good spirits to feed and cloath me.

Good night, my sweet friend, may fortune heap those favours she has deprived me of, ten fold on your head, and I shall not regret their loss,

So truly am I your

HARRIET BEVIL

END OF VOL. I.





